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THIS IS A MEETING WHICH THE PUBLIC ARE ENTITLED TO ATTEND

30th September 2021

Dear Sir/Madam

SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Social Services Scrutiny Committee will be held as a Hybrid Meeting: Via MS Teams/Abraham Derby Room at the General Offices, Ebbw Vale - if you would like to attend please contact committee.services@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk on Thursday, 7th October, 2021 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

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

should you wish to do so. A simultaneous translation will be provided if requested.

2. **APOLOGIES**

To receive.

3. **DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATION**

To consider any declarations of interests and dispensations made.

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

To receive the Minutes of the Social Services Scrutiny Committee held on 22nd July, 2021.

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

5. **ANNUAL REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES 2020/2021** 13 - 40

To consider the report of the Corporate Director Social Services.

6. **CHILDREN AND COMMUNITIES GRANT** 41 - 52

To consider the report of the Head of Children's Services.

7. **PROPOSAL TO DEVELOP A BLAENAU GWENT MY SUPPORT TEAM (MYST)** 53 - 74

To consider the report of the Head of Children's Services.

8. **FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME: 18TH NOVEMBER 2021** 75 - 78

To consider the report.

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 K. Hayden
Councillor W. Hodgins
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 – 22ND JULY, 2021

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICER

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR S.C. THOMAS (CHAIR)

Councillors: D. Bevan
 M. Cook (substitute for Cllr K. Rowson)
 P. Edwards
 K. Hayden
 S. Healy (substitute for Cllr G.A. Davies)
 W. Hodgins
 J. Holt
 G. Paulsen
 T. Smith
 B. Summers

Executive Member Social Services

Councillor J. Mason

Representative from Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW)

Ann Rowling, Lead Inspector (CIW)

AND: Corporate Director of Social Services
 Service Manager Children Looked After
 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>	

<p>No. 2</p>	<p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillors K. Rowson and G.A. Davies.</p> <p>Head of Children's Services Head of Adult Services</p>	
<p>No. 3</p>	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>Councillor Wayne Hodgins declared an interest in the meeting as some of his clients may also be service users of the Social Services Directorate.</p>	
<p>No. 4</p>	<p><u>TIME OF FUTURE MEETINGS</u></p> <p>The Committee AGREED that future meetings be held at 10.00 a.m.</p>	
<p>No. 5</p>	<p><u>SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>The Minutes of the Social Services Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 22nd April, 2021 were submitted.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the Minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	
<p>No. 6</p>	<p><u>PROPOSED SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2021-22</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chair of the Social Services Scrutiny Committee which presented the Social Services Scrutiny Forward Work Programme for 2021-22 (Appendix 1) and to seek approval from Committee.</p> <p>It was noted that the dates referred to on pages 20 & 21 in the last column of the Forward Work Programme should all read 2022.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that the Social Services Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme 2021-22 be agreed.</p>	

ADSS CYMRU – A TRIBUTE TO ALL CARE WORKERS

As agreed with the Chair the Corporate Director of Social Services introduced a short film produced by the Association of Directors of Social Services Cymru in tribute to social care workers in Wales who at great costs to themselves delivered care and support to vulnerable people throughout the pandemic.

A link would be provided by the Corporate Director of Social Services for Members to view the online video.

No. 7

CARE INSPECTORATE WALES (CIW) ASSURANCE CHECK 2021: BLAENAU GWENT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL SOCIAL SERVICES

Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director of Social Services which presented the Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) Assurance check summary as identified in their letter dated the 11th June 2021 (Appendix 1). The purpose of the assurance check was to review how well the local authority's social services continue to help and support adults and children with a focus on safety and well-being. This letter summarises the findings of CIW assurance check on 17 May to 21 May 2021.

The Lead Inspector (CIW) gave an overview of the CIW Assurance check in their letter of 11th June, 2021 which summarised how well the Authority's Social Services Directorate continued to support vulnerable adults and children throughout the pandemic.

The Chair commented that it was a fantastic report highlighting how well Blaenau Gwent had performed during the pandemic. Another Member said it was a major accolade as other Authorities could look to Blaenau Gwent to see how well they had performed and hoped that the press would report on this positive message.

In relation to paragraph 6.6 of the report - 'most practitioners who responded to our survey felt supported by colleagues and managers and regarded their workload as manageable', a Member enquired regarding the word 'most'. The Lead Inspector explained it was usually the case with surveys that some issues arise in relation to

change as not all practitioners were happy to embrace change. The Inspector had spoken with management regarding the issue and felt it was not of major importance.

In response to a Member's question regarding issues with the Welsh Community Care Information System (WCCIS), the Inspector said there were major problems with the system. The Corporate Director of Social Services commented that WCCIS was the Health & Social Care computer system that was promoted by the Welsh Government for all 22 Local Authorities and 7 Health Boards to sign up to and implement. Some Authorities and Health Boards had implemented the system but there were major issues regarding reliability and functionality of the system, the Director was aware of plans to upgrade and make improvements to the system and hoped this would be progressed within the next few months.

A Member commented on the excellent report and praised staff on how they dealt with the difficult period of the pandemic and the measures that had been put in place by the Authority to enable placements to stay together and to allow children to see their families and siblings at such a very difficult time and also the support put in place for Social Workers, Foster carers and everyone else involved, he felt this was excellent news for the Authority.

Another Member commented that it was a glowing report from an external agency and felt that it showed that staff were in touch with the clients they supported and showed that the whole of the Council took their Corporate Parenting role seriously.

Other Members echoed their colleagues' comments on the excellent report and felt that safeguarding procedures in Blaenau Gwent were excellent and felt that staff and officers should be very proud of their performance during the pandemic.

In response to a Member's question regarding how the 25 files that were reviewed were selected, the Inspector explained the files were randomly selected from four categories set out in the guidance sent to Local Authorities. The 25 files reviewed included 5 files from Children's Services and 5 from Adults Services. The Local Authority

were only given a few days notice as to which files were going to be reviewed in order to arrange interviews with social workers, team managers and when appropriate the person the file belonged to.

At the invitation of the Chair the Executive Member for Social Services commented that the report was excellent news for the Authority and especially the Social Services Directorate. He expressed appreciation for the complexity of the work undertaken by the Social Services Directorate in supporting vulnerable adults and children and their dedication and commitment to their work was outstanding especially throughout the pandemic, they had faced many challenges with different ways of working and he was proud of the officers and staff in Blaenau Gwent's Social Services Directorate. He expressed thanks to the Director of Social Services, the Head of Children's Services, the Head of Adult Services and all staff for their commitment and endurance during this challenging period. He also thanked the Social Services Scrutiny Committee for the support they gave him as their Executive Member for Social Services.

The Chair thanked the Executive Member for his heartfelt comments and thanked the Care Inspectorate Wales and the Lead Inspector for her comments and delivering the report.

The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 2; namely that the report and letter from CIW be accepted as provided.

No. 8

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES 2019/20

Consideration was given to the report of the Director of Social Services which presented the Annual Report of the Director of Social Services 2019/2020 (Appendix 1).

The Corporate Director of Social Services introduced the report and highlighted the main points in paragraph 6.4 Adult Services. The Service Manager Children Looked After highlighted the main points contained in paragraph 6.3 Children's Services.

	<p>With regard to referrals a Member enquired when police visited a family if a Social Worker also attended with them and was there a police officer dedicated to providing that service. The Service Manager Children Looked After said that it depended on the nature of the referral, if there were child protection concerns and those concerns had a criminal investigation element then a police officer would attend the referral. There was a dedicated team of police officers via the public protection unit and joint enquiries under Section 47 of the Children’s Act could be undertaken whereby Social Services could make enquiries in relation to the welfare of the children and the police could investigate any criminal element of the concerns.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 2; namely that the report be accepted as provided.</p>	
<p>No. 9</p>	<p><u>UPDATE ON STRATEGY TO SAFELY REDUCE THE NUMBERS OF CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Children’s Services which was presented to update the Social Services Scrutiny Committee on the progress made in relation to the implementation of the Safe Reduction of Children Looked After Strategy 2020 – 2025.</p> <p>The Service Manager Children Looked After spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.</p> <p>A Member commented that there had been no increase in the numbers of children coming into care and enquired if that was due to the lockdown. The Service Manager said that the long term impact of the pandemic had yet to be seen, the Supporting Change Team had continued to visit children who were deemed to be at risk. Staff had worked hard to prevent children coming into care and had also managed to help children exit care via discharge care orders.</p> <p>A Member referred to the number of foster carers in Blaenau Gwent and enquired regarding the progress of recruitment of foster carers. The Service Manager explained that most of the assessments taking place at the</p>	

moment were kinship carers. In relation to recruitment the Foster Wales brand had been officially launched and they were looking at how to collaborate and work together to strengthen Blaenau Gwent's position in the market for recruitment of foster carers to make it more of a Wales-wide approach rather than local authorities working in isolation against the independent providers.

With regard to recruitment of foster carers from independent providers the Service Manager explained that in terms of the differential of spend, when on-costs were factored in there would be minimal potential savings and felt that there would be better management and support of the Authority's own foster carers.

In response to a Member's question regarding the number of existing and new children coming into care in Figures 2, 3, 4 and 5, the Service Manager said that the overall population would include children who had been in care for some time and would be a rolling figure, children coming into and leaving care those figures would be unique to that month.

With regard to the ages of children coming into care, the Team would look to assess all potential options for that child which could include rehabilitation to parents if the parents could make changes, placement with extended family could be considered or adoption. She assured Members that there were mechanisms in place to ensure that plans put in place to support the child did not drift and children move out of the system as safely and quickly as possible regardless of age.

A Member commented that in comparison to other Authorities what was Blaenau Gwent's position in relation to vacancies within the service. The Service Manager said that the vacancy situation was comparable with other Gwent Authorities, particularly for Children's Services and felt it was a national problem and Blaenau Gwent's offer to social workers needed to be comparable with other Authorities and highlight what Blaenau Gwent was good at, she felt that the CIW Assurance check letter highlighted the good performance of Blaenau Gwent's Social Care staff. In relation to advertising and attracting people into the Social Care sector, the Service Manager said they were looking at

what could be done with Universities and other bodies to make social care and social work a more attractive proposition.

The Corporate Director of Social Services said that it was a national issue and Blaenau Gwent had a 'grow your own' approach over the last 4/5 years which helped support workers move onto the degree course to become qualified. Other Authorities were starting to increase their salary rates and offer incentives, which Blaenau Gwent could not compete with. The Directorate provided additional support to newly qualified Social Workers to retain their services but as a small Authority could not offer the same opportunities for career progression as larger Authorities. The Director advised Members that he could present a report later in the year in relation to social work pay and incentives being offered by other Authorities for consideration by the Social Services Scrutiny Committee.

The Executive Member for Social Services said this issue was a critical risk for Blaenau Gwent and across the whole of Wales. There had been discussions with the Director of Social Services, with the intention to raise this issue with the Directors of Social Services across Wales, to look at all possible ways to run an awareness and/or recruitment campaign to increase the opportunities for people to work in the Social Care sector. He felt it was important to safeguard the capacity of staff in Social Services to be able to carry out Blaenau Gwent's responsibilities in Social Services.

A Member requested that a letter of appreciation be forwarded to all members of staff in the Social Services Directorate to express Members appreciation for the excellent work and commitment shown by all Social Services staff.

This course of action was AGREED.

The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that the information contained within the report be accepted.

Agenda Item 5

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: **7th October 2021**

Report Subject: **Annual Report of the Director of Social Services 2020/2021**

Portfolio Holder: **Councillor John Mason, Executive Member Social Services**

Report Submitted by: **Damien McCann, 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)
16.09.2021	17.09.2021	23.09.21			07.10.2021		25.11.21	

1. Purpose of the Report

The purpose of this report is to provide Social Services Scrutiny Committee with the Annual Report of the Director of Social Services 2020/2021 (Appendix 1).

2. Scope and Background

2.1 The performance of the department is monitored throughout the financial year from April to March, with quarterly reports presented to Social Services Scrutiny Committee. At the end of the year a comprehensive self-evaluation of performance is undertaken to inform the Annual Report of the Director of Social Services

2.2 The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 places a statutory duty on all local authorities to produce an annual report on the discharge of its social services functions.

3. Options for Recommendation

Option 1

Members are asked to consider the detail contained in the Annual Report of the Director of Social Services 2020/2021 and contribute to the continuous assessment of effectiveness by making appropriate comments and or recommendations for amendment to the report before consideration at Executive Committee and approval at Council.

Option 2

Accept the report as provided.

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

It is a statutory responsibility of the Director of Social Services to assess the effectiveness of the delivery of Social Services and produce an Annual Report. The

Annual Report contributes and forms part of the Annual Council Reporting Framework (ACRF).

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

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

The Director's Annual Report identifies the pressures and budgetary implications for 2020/2021.

5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

Social Services maintain a directorate risk register which is aligned to both service level and corporate risk. The risk register is reviewed as part of the business planning process and included within the performance reporting of the director of Social Services.

5.3 **Legal**

There are no legal implications with this report

5.4 **Human Resources**

There are no staffing implications related in this report

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 ***Performance Information and Data***

Detail is provided within the Director's Annual Report 2020/2021.

Headline updates:

Across Children's and Adult Services, we have maintained the majority of our services throughout the pandemic and prioritised home visits to safeguarding investigations, children on the Child Protection Register, Children Looked After, care leavers, those children on the 'edge of care' and have continued to discharge patients from hospital (including those recovering from COVID-19) and any emergency assessments. However, Adult Services at the outset of the pandemic had to close day services and respite care facility to ensure the safety of our most vulnerable people and to maintain social distancing, it also allowed us to ensure resources were concentrated at caring for people in their own homes and care homes. We have successfully redeployed staff from community options and Flying Start to our care homes and home care teams to provide cover when staff became sick with Covid-19 or more residents required 1:1 support due to isolation.

Children's and Adult Services have been able to continue working throughout the pandemic outbreak to meet the needs of our children and families, in Adult Services we moved to 7 days a week to ensure we could react appropriately to the issues being faced 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 on COVID wards.

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. Three of our Flying Start children's hubs remained open for children of keyworkers throughout the pandemic.

We 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.

6.2 ***Expected outcome for the public***

The key theme of the Social Services and Well-being Act is to promote the well-being of people who need care and support. Within the annual report it is highlighted where the Directorate has worked closely with the public to improve service delivery and user outcomes. Reporting provides the public with the opportunity to view progress of the Directorate and ensure accountability.

6.3 ***Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)***

The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 looks to build and strengthen on existing arrangements by involving service users, carers and other key partners where possible in helping shape and influence future design of services.

6.4 ***Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)***

The Annual report enables the department to plan for the future as spend, risk and performance is continuously reported on and provides a baseline of where the department is currently and where it needs to be in the future.

6.5 ***Preventative focus***

The work undertaken by the department looks to promote a preventative approach to practice through early identification and intervention. Having an active rather than re active approach to service planning can also help with planning resources and not spending as much on services in the future.

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

Social Services work collaboratively across boundaries to benefit citizens requiring health and social care services across Gwent.

6.7 ***Integration (across service areas)***

The purpose of the SSWBA is to foster integration between Health and Social Services.

6.8 ***Decarbonisation and Reducing Carbon Emissions***

The workforce who deliver the functions of the SSWBA have adopted the agile working policy of the council which will have a positive impact on car emissions as staff are now able to work from home to undertake paperwork and do not have to travel to the office.

6.9a ***Socio Economic Duty Impact Assessment***

All service provision and functions that sit under social services are subject to socio economic disadvantages for example, low income, material and area deprivation. All programmes work towards addressing these disadvantages.

6.9b ***Equality Impact Assessment***

The overarching vision is to support the needs of the most vulnerable children and adults in our communities through a range of early intervention, prevention and support mechanisms. With the aim of building resilient individuals, resilient families and resilient communities.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

- 7.1 The Annual Report for 2020/2021 will be monitored via quarterly monitoring reports to the Social Services Scrutiny Committee.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

Appendix 1 – Annual Report of the Director of Social Services

Social Services Annual Report 2020/21



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Introduction

Welcome to the Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council Social Services Annual Report 2020/2021
Over the past few years the Department has been developing this annual report to highlight the key areas of improvements and challenges that have been faced.

This report has been developed in line with the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, referred to as 'the Act' throughout this document. The Act aims to provide the most radical change to the way in which Social Services is provided since 1948. It focuses on improving the well-being of people who come to Social Services for support. It is person centred and focuses on prevention and reducing the need for care and support. It recognises that responsibility lies not only within Social Services Departments, but also within the wider Local Authority and with partners (particularly Health and the Third Sector).

The Act shares similar principles with a number of key national/regional strategies that are being implemented throughout the Council, in particular the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

The Director of Social Services has a statutory requirement to publish an annual report in relation to the delivery of its functions, to evaluate its performance and also include lessons learned. A key aspect of the report is showing how the six Quality Standards have been implemented in relation to well-being outcomes.

This report provides a strategic overview of the work undertaken throughout 2020/2021 and what plans are in place to move forward. Further supporting information can be found from page 21 of the report.

The report includes evidence of where Social Services have worked collaboratively with partners.

Experiences and learning from service users has been considered as part of the development of the report. Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) findings, Audit Wales (AW) findings, case studies, complaints and compliments and quarterly reporting have all been considered as part of the development of this report and evidence from these has been used to inform future learning.

The annual report is used to demonstrate accountability to citizens and service users. As part of this process, the report will be presented to full Council for ratification before it is published on the Council's website and will then be sent to Welsh Ministers. The report will be available on line bilingually and will be shared with partner agencies in order to share good practice, learning and experiences.

COVID – 19 The Council's Response

In March 2020, a decision was made by the UK Government to put the UK into lockdown in order to try and curb the spread of the global pandemic COVID 19. As part of this, the Council had to act quickly and had to consider alternative methods of service delivery, ensuring that the most vulnerable in society were supported.

There has been a particular focus on 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.

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 any future outbreak. 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.

The Directorate has had to work at speed to try and ensure our communities safety against contracting the virus and has sometimes had to make decisions without the consultation or engagement of the public. This 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 and there has been involvement with the children and families we work with.



Director's Summary of Performance

As the Corporate Director of Social Services in Blaenau Gwent, I am pleased to present the annual report for 2020/21 which is a requirement of the Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) and the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 (the Act).

As I reflect on 2020/21 I have to say it has been a year like no other, it has been extremely challenging, difficult, exhausting and traumatic for all our staff in Social Services. It has been a roller coaster of a year with many ups and downs throughout. I have nothing but admiration and pride for our staff who in the face of the virus did not take a backward step, they were truly inspiring, courageous, focussed, committed and professional throughout as we all fought this relentless and indiscriminate virus.

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. The first peak of the pandemic had been less intensive than had been 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. However, following a short period of some normality during the Summer of 2020, we saw the virus start to return again as we moved into the autumn, a second wave which was much bigger than the first wave and one which really tested our capability, capacity and resources to the full across Health and Social Care.

There have been difficulties along the way, there was a shortage of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) at the very start of the outbreak but this was resolved and enabled us to ensure the whole social care system had sufficient and appropriate equipment. Testing initially was also problematic with a small number of social care staff being able to be tested but they needed to travel down to Cardiff to undertake the test, again this was eventually improved with more local testing facilities. 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 Care homes. Couple this with no or limited staff testing in Care Homes to begin with created some of the outbreaks spreading within these Homes and sadly resulted in a number of deaths related to COVID -19 across Gwent.

Across Children's and Adult Services, we have maintained the majority of our services throughout the pandemic and prioritised home visits to safeguarding investigations, children on the Child Protection Register, Children Looked After, care leavers, those children on the 'edge of care' and have continued to discharge patients from hospital (including those recovering from COVID-19) and any emergency assessments. However, Adult Services 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, it also allowed us to ensure resources were concentrated at caring for people in their own homes and care homes. We have successfully redeployed staff from community options and Flying Start to our care homes and home care teams to provide cover when staff became sick with Covid-19 or more residents required 1:1 support due to isolation.

In Children's and Adult Services all cases were risk rated by team managers which were continually reviewed throughout the pandemic. 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 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 main offices at Anvil Court, the Vitcc and Beaufort Road. Each team has provided a skeleton staff to work from the offices on a rota basis and also from home. We have continued to meet with partners, agencies and people virtually through a number of digital platforms included teleconferencing, SKYPE and Microsoft TEAMS.

Children's and Adult Services have been able to continue working throughout the pandemic outbreak to meet the needs of our children and families, in Adult Services we moved to 7 days a week to ensure we could react appropriately to the issues being faced 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 on COVID wards.

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. Three of our Flying Start children's hubs remained open for children of keyworkers throughout the pandemic.

We 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.

Despite the pandemic we have still continued to improve services, the Safe Reduction of Children Looked After Strategy continues to reduce the numbers of children looked after and at the end of March 2021 it stood at 200 down from 211 the previous year (down from a high of 237). The My Support Team have 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.

Social Services took over the operational running of the Community Meals service from the 1st April 2020, at the point of taking the service on 4 of the 7 drivers had to be shielded. 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 to 128 meals a day on average.

The continuation of the Integrated Care Fund was very welcome news during the year as this supports key preventative projects across both Adults and Children's Services, it also enabled us to purchase technology such as iPads and Amazon echo's to keep families and their loved ones connected during lockdowns. In addition, the Children's and Communities Grant has also sought to address the support needs of the most vulnerable children and adults in our communities through a range of early intervention and prevention mechanisms.

We have been supporting our Foster Carers during these difficult times and we sought feedback through two questionnaires during the pandemic and we received very positive feedback about the level of support the Directorate had provided our foster carers.

The vaccination programme which commenced during 2020 has moved at pace ensuring our residents within care homes and their staff have been vaccinated to reduce the risk of transmission, this has moved quickly through the priority groups with excellent take up across Blaenau Gwent. As the year progressed in early 2021 then Welsh Government has slowly gradually reduced or eased restrictions and as we look forward then we will need to carefully consider the timings of the reopening of some of our services.

Finally, I would want to say a huge 'thank you' to all staff, as they have worked immensely hard during these difficult times. Some of them have been unfortunate enough to have caught the virus particularly during this second wave whilst we have had more access to testing. Hopefully they have fully recovered or if not are well on the way to recovery. Looking forward let's hope this year is one which sees us take control of the virus and a start on the long road to recovery.



Damien McCann
Corporate Director of
Social Services



Cllr John Mason
Executive Member
Social Services

How People are shaping our Services

As part of the Act, people who use care and support services are invited to complete an annual survey in relation to the provision of care and support. Due to the COVID outbreak and available resources being redeployed to support the emergency response, questionnaires were put on hold whilst services were redirected to support the most vulnerable within our community. Welsh Government were also involved heavily in the COVID 19 response and stated that they did require any local authority to provide a questionnaire analysis.

The Social Services Directorate is committed to providing high quality services to its citizens and prior to the COVID outbreak multiple methods of engagement were implemented in order to achieve this. Due to the pandemic this high level of engagement was not possible throughout the year however some examples are detailed below.

Consultation

- Foster carers have been consulted twice via questionnaires during the pandemic and the feedback is very positive about the level of support they have received from the department.
- During the Pandemic Provider services have consulted twice via letter to those who attend Augusta, Cwrt Mytton relatives and supported living. Feedback has been positive about the level of support received.

Engagement

- Involvement with Individuals, children and families occurs on a daily basis and is recorded as part of care planning.

Complaints and Compliments

The Social Services Department is committed to providing high quality services to its users; however, despite best intentions, it is recognised that sometimes things can go wrong and the Social Services complaints procedure provides people with the opportunity to voice their concerns when they are dissatisfied with a service. The service uses learning from these complaints to improve services moving forward. The service also welcomes positive feedback and compliments and also uses this information to further improve services.

Examples of complaints received in Children's Services this year were :-

- Unhappy with communication from the department;
- Unhappy with the way staff dealt with concerns;
- Unhappy with the length of time social services took to respond to concerns raised; and
- Unhappy with being passed around departments and having to repeat the information.

In Adult Services examples of complaints were:-

- Unhappy with the service provided by in-house carers; and
- Poor communication.

In order to continue to improve services, the outcomes of complaint investigations and learning from them are undertaken to prevent the situation from occurring again. During 2020/2021 examples of learning identified and actioned include:

Adults

- Staff were reminded to be clear about their roles and responsibilities when communicating with individuals and their families;
- Staff were reminded that communication should be undertaken on agreed actions/plans with individuals and/or their families so as not to raise expectations ; and
- Staff were reminded of the importance of sharing information between teams, staff and the importance of recording conversation and actions agreed. Regular audits to be undertaken to ensure compliance

Children

- Staff were reminded of the need to engage in clear communication with families and the need to be open and honest with them Staff offered further training to improve their communication; and
- Continue to monitor case allocations and to undertake dip sample audits to further inform the local authority of current practice.



Promoting and Improving the Well-being of Those We Help

Priorities

The Corporate Plan 2020/22 is the Council’s roadmap setting out the vision, values and priorities of the Council. One key priority within the Plan is, ‘To enable people to maximise their independence, develop solutions and take an active role in their Communities’. The business plans within Social Services are aligned directly to the Corporate Plan to ensure that the priorities can be implemented over the plan period. The priorities are shown below and the Quality Standards demonstrate where improvement has been made, challenges have been addressed and where outcomes have been achieved. The Corporate Plan priorities were written to cover the four year period 2018/22, however, an annual review of the priorities and supporting actions was undertaken to ensure priorities remain fit for purpose.

Corporate Plan Social Services Priorities 2020/22 are:

- To improve accessibility, provision of information and advice to enable people to support their own wellbeing;
- To work with people to make sure they have a say in achieving what matters to them;
- To intervene early to prevent problems from becoming greater;
- To promote and facilitate new ways of delivering integrated responsive care and support with partners;
- To continue our programme of public engagement and respond in a timely and effective way to feedback;
- To build a collaborative culture between services, partners and communities working together and with people directly to shape and deliver services. i.e. (Community Asset Transfers);
- To put effective safeguarding arrangements in place to protect people from harm; and
- To develop a partnership approach to maximising income reducing the impacts of Poverty.

Children’s Services Priorities 2020/21

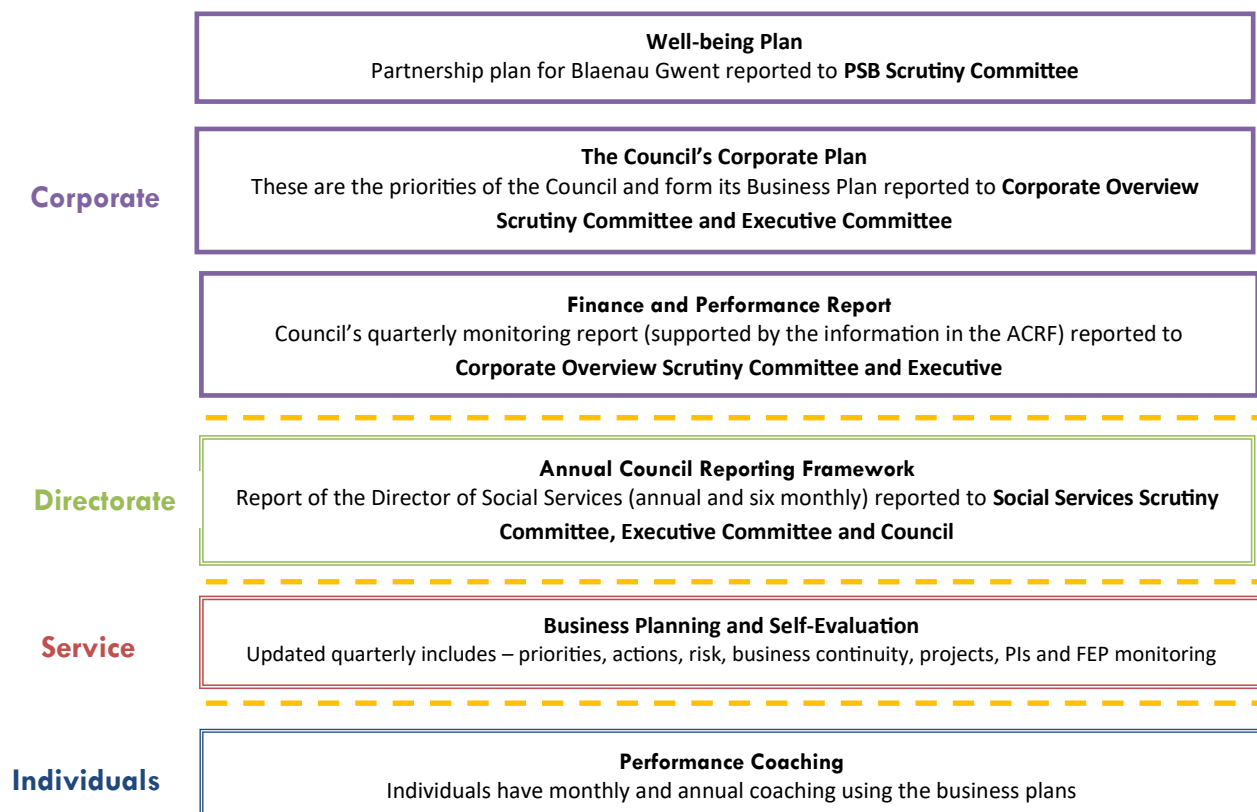
<i>Priority Title</i>	<i>BRAG</i>
Enhance screening and IAA provision (children and adults)	Amber
Support and encourage a cultural change across Children’s services by ensuring that community members have a say in what matters to them	Green
Implementation of the Prevention and Early Intervention Strategy	Green
Improve outcomes for Children Looked After by implementing the Corporate Parenting Action Plan	Green
Implement the Safe Reduction of Looked After Children Strategy 2017 –2020	Green
Ensure that all children in Blaenau Gwent have the best start in life (Early Years)	Green
To provide and commission a flexible and affordable mix of high quality placements	Green
All teams to ensure the children and young people of Blaenau Gwent are safeguarded	Green
Manage the Children’s Services budget to ensure expenditure comes within budget	Green
Children's Services contributes to meeting the Sustainable Development Principles	Green

Adults Services Priorities 2020/21

<i>Priority Title</i>	<i>BRAG</i>
Enhance screening and IAA Adult Services support at our front door - in line with recommendations within the SSWB (Wales) Act 2014	Green
Support and encourage a cultural change across Adults services by ensuring that citizens have a say in what matters to them	Green
Ensure that preventative support is available to citizens - promoting personal independence and reducing dependencies	Green
Ensure that we provide / commission modern, high quality care and support provision that meet both current and future well-being needs of our citizens	Green
To develop alternative models of support that promotes independence and supports well-being outcomes	Green
Ensure that vulnerable adults are safeguarded	Green
Develop and maximise opportunities for partnership working across Welsh Government Flexibilities Grants and Welfare reform related programmes	Green
Manage the Adults Service core budget and grant programmes to ensure that expenditure comes within budget	Green
Adult Services contributes to meeting the Sustainable Development Principles	Green

The framework below shows how reporting and monitoring works throughout the Council to create a 'golden thread'.

Planning Framework



Progress of the Quality Standards

During a comprehensive assessment of performance at the end of 2020/21, the following achievements and challenges were identified as part of the Council's Performance Management Framework.

Working with people to define and co-produce personal well-being outcomes that people wish to achieve

Children's and Adults Services have been able to continue working throughout the pandemic to meet the needs of our vulnerable adults, children and families. This included continued engagement with individuals, parents and children.

The Information, Advice and Assistance (IAA) service prioritised home visits to families and individuals in order to undertake safeguarding investigations and provide support to children on the child protection register, children looked after, care leavers and those children on the 'edge of care'. This service has continued to provide a timely response to all referrals without disruption. The IAA service have continued to enable citizens to access appropriate support including access to reablement provision that aims to promote independence and reduce dependency on traditional models of care and support. Throughout COVID 19, they have supported the Council Locality Hubs, providing support and advice to those people who were previously not known to Social Services but who required support due to a deterioration in their well-being or owing to isolation and shielding.

A successful bid for additional funding from the Welsh Government Integrated Care Fund (ICF) allowed us to purchase iPads & Amazon echo's to promote and install throughout Blaenau Gwent. This use and access of technologies has been extremely important during the past few months in not only linking our staff with their colleagues and peers but, importantly, using social media and other IT platforms to keep in contact with families, offering day to day support and supporting vulnerable citizens to remain safely at home. Where possible we have ensured that welfare and 'keep in touch' systems have been put in place using technologies such as community alarm systems, mobile phones, tablets and iPads etc as part of a loan system as part of care and support planning. These devices are popular with our Visual Impairment services as they have enabled individuals to communicate with family members via voice or video calling. They are also used to organise appointments, set reminders, order shopping and even use apps which read out letters or describe the home setting and people around them.

An extension of the Integrated Care Fund (ICF) for a further 12 months' (2021/22) has been announced. This funding supports key preventative projects across both Adult and Children's Social Care including; older people with complex needs and long term conditions including dementia; people with learning disabilities; children with complex needs due to disability or illness; and carers, including young carers.

There has been a significant cultural change in relation to adopting a strengths based approach to the work we do. This in turn has enabled the children and families we work with to have a stronger voice in saying what really matters to them. Social Care Wales have recognised the progress that has been made and, as a result, we have been asked to speak at an event promoting this approach.

The active offer of advocacy is embedded into practice and quality assurance meetings take place on a quarterly basis with NYAS our advocacy provider.

Working with people and partners to protect and promote people's physical and mental health and emotional well-being

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. Gwent Heads of Service have also worked very closely together to ensure the work of social services, being delivered throughout the pandemic, have been consistent.

The corporate parenting board has continued to meet throughout the pandemic via Microsoft Teams. Despite the disruption caused by the pandemic, progress has continued to be made on the action plan.

The Gwent Transformation Programme has continued to make good progress, with the programmes adapting their scope and focus to ensure they are able to support the local response to COVID-19. However, due to the pandemic, some of the projects under the programme had to stop, reduce their offer to the public, or redirect services. This has delayed the time available for these models to evidence success, and for their evaluations to be completed. Transformation funding will continue for a further year in its current format until March 2022.

Winter Planning is an integral part of the Health and Social Care system responsibility and this year's plan was submitted to Welsh Government, following development with all partners within the Regional Partnership Board (RPB) who agreed to recommend a number of the activities in order to support patients within the Gwent area. The development of the plan also involved colleagues across the Health Board and partners in Social Care, third sector and Welsh Ambulance Service Trust.

Collaborative working with our health visiting colleagues and education colleagues has ensured that all vulnerable children in Blaenau Gwent were identified and supported. Due to access to GP surgeries being restricted over the past year, we enabled health visitors to use the Flying Start hubs to undertake routine health checks under the Health Child Wales Programme. Also, close work with education colleagues ensured that all vulnerable children were offered school hub placements. The numbers of social workers in Families First who are aligned to schools to support when needs have been identified and take steps to prevent them from escalating have been increased.

Work has continued with the third sector to support vulnerable families. In particular working with Phoenix Domestic Abuse Service when dealing with domestic violence, Llamau when dealing with mental health issues and GAVO who sit on our Children and Communities Grant (CCG) Steering group. This group is responsible for seeking to address the support needs of the most vulnerable children and adults in our communities through a range of early intervention, prevention and support mechanisms.

During this period, adult services have also worked closely with our Gwent Local Authority Partners and Aneurin Bevan University Health Board to implement Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for all discharges from hospitals to care settings, including a person's own home if they are to receive a domiciliary or reablement care package. We have also devised a similar SOP for admissions to a care setting from the community in an emergency situation, for example, as a result of carer breakdown or deterioration in a person's condition.

A significant change in service delivery for our disability team has resulted from an Evaluation by Worcester University. After listening to those that use the services it has been decided to change the team to 0 – 25 which will include children and young adults with disabilities going through transition. Those over 25 will be picked up by the Long term social work teams.

Protecting and safeguarding people from abuse, neglect or harm

Service developments have continued despite the pandemic. The police restructured Public Protection Services allowing the development of local, multi-agency, all age safeguarding, early intervention and prevention hubs. These hubs were piloted in Newport and Blaenau Gwent and led to improving: early information sharing; timely decision making; improved quality of Public Protection Notice referrals; improved integrated service responses to children and families; and timeliness of referral pathways and effectiveness of support and interventions offered by the Early Intervention Projects.

Social Work Teams have continued to provide services to all vulnerable adults, children in need of care and support, children on the child protection register, children looked after, children with disabilities and care leavers. At the start of the pandemic, all Team Managers risk rated their caseloads and only those identified as red (high risk) received face to face visits. These visits were undertaken in line with the regional home visit guidance developed, which was based on advice from Public Health Wales and Welsh Government. When the initial lockdown ended, face to face visits were offered to all open cases and this has remained in place to date to prevent needs from escalating. The teams have also used social media to support and keep in contact with individuals, children and families which has worked very well for some. If a person was deemed 'at risk' then they would always be seen face to face to ensure they were safe. We have continued to see children who are on the child protection register face to face for their statutory visits and we have continued to work face to face with children and families where there is a high risk of them coming into care.

The various meetings required under the Wales Safeguarding Procedures have continued to take place but by virtual means. This has seen greater participation of partners, however some individuals, children and families initially struggled to engage with the process. The department saw this process as crucial so worked with these to engage. 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.

The initial Safe Children Looked After (CLA) Reduction Strategy was a 3-year strategy and is due to end this year. There has been a continual slow but steady decline in the numbers of children looked after in Blaenau Gwent during the implementation of the Strategy with the number of CLA reducing from 211 in March 2020 to 200 in March 2021. The Strategy has been independently evaluated by Worcester University which supports the strategy review. The review includes a detailed overview of the progress made under each of the 3 objectives and a refresh of the actions required to continue to deliver these. It is recognised that the refreshed strategy needs to be longer term to recognise the significant amount of work required in order to continue and maintain the downward trend in numbers of CLA. Therefore, the next strategy will be over a period of 5 years. As a department, we continue to be committed to reducing these numbers further over the lifespan of the new/refreshed strategy.

The number of children on the child protection register have remained stable over the last 12 months and much progress has been made in relation to the prevention agenda. This includes the development of the multiagency hub which sits in the IAA team.

The Regional Safeguarding Board continued to meet virtually and increased its frequency to monthly to ensure safeguarding data is regularly monitored and so that partner agencies could share intelligence on emerging safeguarding issues in the region. The board led on raising awareness of the need to report safeguarding concerns across the region and lobbied Welsh Government to take a national approach to this.

Our Early Year's Child Care and Play Team have played a crucial role during the pandemic. 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 with three of our Flying Start children's hubs remaining open for these children throughout the pandemic. The team have also provided significant support to child care providers during this period which has played a large part in 64% of providers remaining open throughout the period.

Some staff were redeployed during this time to ensure priority services continued to be delivered. Examples of this are: the redeployment of staff to 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 during the COVID-19 crisis; and staff being redeployed into adult domiciliary care.

All CLA have continued to be seen in line with statutory requirements. When these visits have been undertaken face to face the necessary risk assessments have been done and protective PPE measures undertaken. We have kept in contact with some of our children virtually using WhatsApp which has worked very well for all involved. All of our CLA who live in Blaenau Gwent have been offered education placements throughout the pandemic. This has been a crucial resource and supported placement stability. We also ensure that each child had access to IT equipment to make sure they could access on line learning and our education coordinators have offered individual support to those children with additional needs.

Many residents in care homes, particularly those who are living with dementia, have required additional support during periods of isolation, both in their own homes and when living in a care setting. This support has been coordinated by our social care teams and funded by the Welsh Government Hardship Grant.

The Community Meals service is currently providing meals to an average of 122 people per day, an increase of 30% since April 2020. The service is continuing to develop and, for the first time ever, our staff provided community meals on Christmas Day to those who were unable to have family support due to the pandemic.

Our Community Options Service continues to provide a wide range of day activities to vulnerable citizens aged 18 and over. As at 1st February 2020, 185 people were attending Community Options (day services) on one or more day a week. As the pandemic continued, we realised that some vulnerable adults and their families needed additional support and required access to daily sessions at both Bert Denning Centre and Lake View. We have been able to gradually and safely open both these buildings for restricted attendance and sessional support. Subsequently, our Community Options programme of support has developed further as the pandemic has progressed and a blended 3 level model of service developed:

- **Level 1 – Specialist support at Bert Denning** for those who require critical support who have complex health needs including hydrotherapy session within the pool as part of a therapy programme.
- **Level 2 – Critical outreach activities** that support citizens to achieve their outcomes either within their own home or community around their home including accompanied walks in line with social distancing and lock down regulations.
- **Level 3 – Virtual support** including regular telephone contact and sessional digital support and virtual 'teams' sessions.

Supporting people to develop safely and to maintain healthy domestic, family and personal relationships

Work has continued to review and develop our services that deliver long term care, albeit within the context of working within COVID 19 restrictions. We have supported the most vulnerable people within our communities, many of whom have been isolating or shielding as well as supporting people who were shielding and living within regulated settings where they had been unable to see families or friends.

At the outset of the pandemic, day services and respite care facilities had to be closed to ensure the safety of our most vulnerable people, maintain social distancing and ensure resources were concentrated on caring for people in their own homes and care homes. However, we have managed to have the respite facility available in case of an emergency to prevent carer breakdown. This lack of availability of care home and emergency respite support has been challenging with all 15 of our Care Homes being closed to new admissions due to COVID out breaks at some stage. The redeployment of staff to provide cover when staff became sick or to provide more support due to staff isolation has been successful.

There has been a reduction in the care families require from domiciliary care agencies, 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.

Blaenau Gwent and Caerphilly have established a framework of accredited and approved registered domiciliary care providers to deliver Support at Home Services for both Adults and Children. The tender was for new business only, so that existing care packages remained with the same provider thereby providing a continuity of care. The ultimate aim was to strengthen the domiciliary care market place by effectively recruiting to the local workforce sector and growing market supply.

Throughout the past 12 months we have continued to develop our Emergency Care @ Home service (DASH). This provides emergency support to avoid hospital admissions and also supports rapid discharge. During 2020/21 we secured £148,162 additional one off funding to support this provision, including supporting additional capacity across the private sector.

A partnership approach to both the revision of the Living Independently in Blaenau Gwent in the 21st Century Strategy and the Aneurin Bevan University Health Board Place Based Care Strategy is due to commence in May 2021 with a view to publishing the revised Strategy from April 2022.

Despite the Early Years Integration Transformation Pilot needing to be delivered in a different way due to the pandemic, we have still managed to successfully roll out the early transformation programme with the pilot having gone live in Cwm in September 2020 and good results being received.

The Children and Communities Grant (CCG) steering group has continued to ensure the 7 preventative programmes continued to deliver services. The 7 programmes which include flying start and families first moved to a hybrid approach of face to face and virtual service delivery, maximising virtual platforms and reaching significant numbers of children and families with support and advice during lockdown.

Just prior to the pandemic, Children's Services were given ICF grant money to deliver: Family Group Conferencing; enhance support for Special Guardians; provide support to the supporting change team to include psychological support; and enhance the Young Person's Mediation Service. All of this was delivered in 2020/21.

The work of My Support Team (MyST) and our 14 plus Team has led to a decrease in the numbers in residential care with children moving to foster care and in some cases returned home to parents.

Working with and supporting people to achieve greater economic well-being, have a social life and live in suitable accommodation that meets their needs

Throughout the pandemic the placement team has continued to support foster carers. Face to face visits have been undertaken when necessary to support vulnerable placements but a lot of support has occurred by keeping in touch via phone or WhatsApp. Regular update letters have been sent to foster carers and a regular newsletter sent out offering advice on how to manage various aspects of care during the pandemic. Foster carers have been consulted twice via questionnaires during the pandemic and the feedback has been very positive about the level of support received from the department. Fostering assessments have continued to be undertaken and foster panels have continued to meet virtually.

My Support Team (MyST) has continued to provide direct interventions to young people during lockdown, including 24 hours on call and managing risky complex situations and young people. MyST has provided 22 practice consultations to staff, 2 ongoing consultations related to children currently in residential care with very complex needs and 25 consultation sessions for foster carers.

Virtual adoption assessments have continued throughout the pandemic with final home visits being made face to face. Adoption training has moved to virtual delivery and feedback from adopters has been positive. Children have continued to be placed with adoptive parents following well-structured guidance developed by the National Adoption Service.

Despite the challenges of the pandemic, our staff have continued to work in partnership with our Housing Providers and technology developers so that we can ensure that we promote technologies as much as possible. Our dementia smart flat is currently 'under construction'. This will showcase home automation, a dementia sensory room and equipment, linked to the cooker, which can detect if there is someone near the cooker, food boiling over, switch the cooker off or alarm the monitoring centre. This initiative has been previously reported and is funded via Integrated Care Funding (ICF capital monies).

During 2020/21, we have continued to have good partnership and working arrangements between our Registered Social Landlord partners including Tai Calon, colleagues in Housing Strategy, the Supporting People Team and the Community Resource Team (CRT) ensuring that key partners are involved when allocating properties to citizens who have complex needs and mobility issues. Our Supporting People Team have supported our commissioned Housing Support providers to move to COVID secure ways of working. This has included working with the Housing Team to ensure support is provided to the homeless population and those requiring emergency accommodation by providing digital support as opposed to face to face contact. This has also meant providing support to those staff working in supported accommodation (housing projects, domestic abuse and homelessness). Despite the pressures that the staff have faced, we have remained actively involved in the development of new housing developments. The construction of additional respite units at Augusta Respite Centre have unfortunately been delayed due to COVID but we are assured that the project should be concluded by January 2022.

The creation of 10 young person flats in (Ty Parc) Tredegar is going well with 17 clients to date. Unfortunately, 1 bedroom flats are still in short supply and discussions are on-going with colleagues in Housing Strategy Team regarding the need to access and/or development more 1 bedroom flats for our care leavers. This is being fed into the Corporate Housing Strategy so it becomes a strategic consideration when bringing forward new development.

The 'Move On' panel has been a massive success with quite a lot of young people accessing and doing well in secured accommodation. A focus on preparing our children for independent living will be possible with an extension to Beaufort Road being created specifically for this focus.

How We Do What We Do

Our Workforce and How We Support their Professional Roles

The past year has been an extraordinarily challenging period for the Social Care Sector. An unimaginable experience for the workforce which they were able to deal with through resolve, dedication and commitment.

Workforce Development, as a support service, needed to contribute to the emergency response in whatever way the sector needed.

The year focused on

- maintaining the provision of essential care skills for the army of volunteers, redeployed staff, and new staff.
- utilising every method possible to enable the successful qualification of student social workers and registered care workers.
- being informed enough to know what the sector needed right then and how.
- being informed enough to help prevent what the sector definitely didn't need.

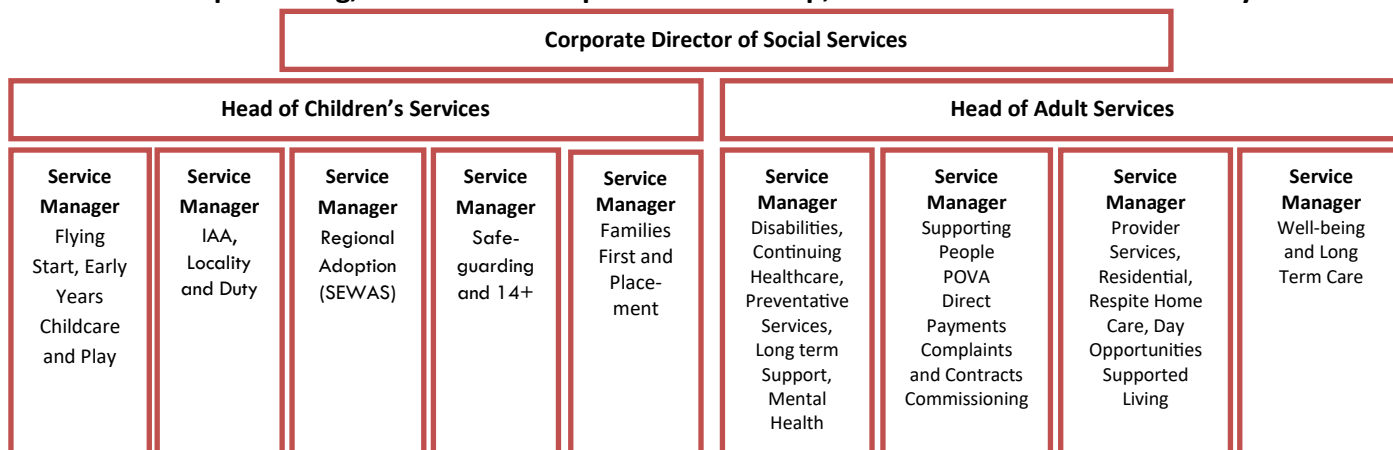
Innovative ways of delivering traditional classroom-based training were maximised. Early reaction to the need for a different model enabled the delivery of a robust digital based offering. Risk assessments, planning, and creative thinking led to a carefully measured return to the classroom for those skills just not suited to a full digital approach.

The changed preferences of the workforce have made a lasting impression on future delivery models for workforce development, models that better suit the workforce and the employer.

It was expected that end of year figures may reflect a downward trend for provision of learning. It is now known that the increase in digital alternatives balanced out the impact of cancellations and the lower participant ratio that had to be practiced. The speedy provision of easy to access essential learning far outweighed the importance of any data collection for example locally produced essential care YouTube videos had over 9,000 views. Any reportable figures do not reflect the true picture and probably only represent 50% or less of the supportive learning that actually occurred.

Benefits continue to be realised for and by the workforce through the scale of opportunity possible due to the joint workforce development service model hosted by Blaenau Gwent in partnership with Caerphilly.

Our Partnership Working, Political and Corporate Leadership, Governance and Accountability



The Corporate Director of Social Services is a member of the Council’s Corporate Leadership Team, whereby all Council Directors meet on a weekly basis to consider and make strategic and operational decisions (although some decisions need to be considered by Scrutiny and then ratified by Executive or Council).

The Directorate has one Executive Member who has Portfolio responsibility for Social Services as a whole. The Directorate is scrutinised by the Social Services Scrutiny Committee and safeguarding information is reported to the Joint Social Services and Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee. Regular liaison meetings are held with the Directorate, the Executive Member and the Chair and Vice Chair of the Scrutiny Committee.

As a whole, the Council has a clear governance and accountability framework and Performance Management Framework in place which all directorates are signed up to. These frameworks are complied with by Social Services who also have additional monitoring requirements as part of the Act.

The Social Services Directorate is subject to audit, inspection and review by the Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW). On a quarterly basis Social Services Senior Managers meet with CIW for liaison meetings. CIW also undertake an annual review and evaluation of the Directorate’s performance.

Audit and Inspection Progress

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) Children’s Services

In 2018 CIW reported on their inspection undertaken on Children’s Social Services in Blaenau Gwent. Despite the overall summary being positive, the CIW made recommendations for improvement which have been monitored as part of the corporate business planning process. The progress position of these recommended proposals for improvement, is as follows:-

Number of Recommended Proposals for improvement	Completed	On Track for Delivery	Ongoing Recommendations
7	4	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalise and Implement a number of key policies, procedures and strategies’ • Develop an overarching quality assurance framework to enable coordinated audit and monitoring activity to regularly challenge and support operational multi-agency practice. • Improve the quality of assessments to demonstrate a full consideration of need and a clear record of analysis of the child's need and wellbeing outcomes.

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) Fostering Services

In 2018 CIW reported on their inspection of the Fostering Service in Blaenau Gwent. Despite the overall summary being positive the CIW made recommendations for improvement which have been monitored as part of the corporate business planning process. The progress position of these recommended proposals for improvement, is as follows:-

Number of Recommended Proposals for improvement	Completed	On Track for Delivery	Ongoing Recommendations
15	14	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Action should be taken to increase the breadth of experience of fostering panel members'

Collaboration

Blaenau Gwent Council supports partnership and collaborative working and the Social Services Department continues to work with a wide range of partners where partnership opportunities provide better outcomes for local residents than the Council could achieve if working on its own. Social Services work in partnership with a variety of stakeholders including staff, residents and businesses. In addition, Social Services fully participates in the sharing of knowledge, good practice and information, which can result in improved services.

Regional Partnership Boards

The Social Services and Well-being Act sets out a statutory requirement for the development of Regional Partnership Boards. The Boards have been established on current local health board footprints. The Gwent Board includes ABUHB and Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Monmouthshire, Newport and Torfaen local authorities. The Executive member in each local authority, with responsibility for health and social care, sits on the Regional Partnership Board. It is an advisory body which provides oversight and direction for areas of integrated working across health and social care. The main priorities of the Board for 2020/21 has been the Coronavirus outbreak across partner agencies and the effect on services. Secondly, the continuation of the Transformational Offer beyond 2021, in response to the Welsh Government's new long term plan for health and social care 'A Healthier Wales'. Thirdly, the reallocation of underspend for 2019/20 and the continuation of the Integrated Care Revenue and Capital Funds. Finally, it had considered the Integrated Winter Plan for 2020/21.

'Mwy na geiriau/ More than just words

As a department we continue to monitor compliance with our responsibilities within More Than Just Words and the Active Offer. We continue to ensure that when citizens contact both our Adult and Children Services Departments, that they are offered the opportunity to communicate in the language of their choice. Our assessment tools within our Welsh Community Care Information System (WCCIS) system specifically asks the question "Do you require this conversation / assessment to be carried out in Welsh?" The form is then attached to the person's referral.

Our commissioned providers work in partnership with us to promote the Welsh Language and this is reflected in our contracts and service level agreements.

Our Financial Resources and How We Plan For the Future

The total budget allocation for Social Services for 2020/21 was £46.30m. This is an increase from last year by £0.899m. At the end of 2020/21 Social Services had an underspend of £1,120,905 and this is due to vacant posts, Support for Families & Vulnerable Children's, ICF, Transformation and Winter Pressures Grant Funding.

The provision of regular financial forecasting reports in line with the budget monitoring and reporting framework has enabled the Social Services Senior Management Team to make informed decisions on service delivery.

In setting the 2021/22 budget, Council agreed a number of savings proposals totalling £0.155m. For 2020/21 the department achieved £643,000 of savings.

The allocated budget and outturn for 2020/21 is provided in the table below:

Service Area	Budget	Outturn	Variance (Adverse)/
Children's Services	£13,247,000	£13,193,465	54,335
Adult Services	£26,118,120	£25,781,618	1,306,792
Business Management / Staff Support	£5,986,050	£5,821,682	164,368
Other Social Services Related Costs		£400,000	(£400,000)
Total	£45,351,970	£44,231,065	£1,120,905

The budget for 2021/22 is provided in the table below and includes Financial Efficiency Project savings of £0.155m.

Social Services Budget 2021/22		£
1	Commissioning & Social Work	3,562,250
2	Children Looked After	7,313,340
3	Family Support Services	188,600
4	Youth Justice	232,920
5	Other Children's and Family Services	2,315,910
6	Older People Aged 65 and Over	6,076,370

Social Services Budget 2020/21		£
7	Adults under 65 with Physical Disabilities	41,800
8	Adults under 65 with Learning Disabilities	3,659,130
9	Adults under 65 with Mental Health Needs	596,130
10	Other Adult Services	367,890
11	Community Care	15,659,600
12	Support Service & Management Costs	1,024,130
13	Corporate Recharges	5,212,400
Grand Total		46,250,470

Conclusion

The Social Services Directorate has responded to the COVID-19 pandemic over the past 12 months, continuing to deliver services, albeit in a different way, to ensure that our most vulnerable residents and children continue to get the care and support they require.

Collaborative work with partners and as a region has ensured a consistent approach has been taken to delivering services during the outbreak, in line with Welsh Government and Public Health Wales guidance, ensuring minimised harm of COVID-19 and keeping people as safe as possible from contracting this virus whilst continuing to deliver services.

Learning from this pandemic along with the implementation of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 will shape and influence future design of services going forward.

The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 was a response to the Welsh Government review of Social Services in 2010 (Sustainable Social Services) which recognised that without radical change to the way we worked, services would become unaffordable in the near future as a result of demographic pressures and the changing expectations of the public at a time of financial austerity.

The Act looks to build and strengthen on existing arrangements by involving service users, carers and other key partners, where possible, in helping to shape and influence future design of services. This is supported by the Directorate who look to promote a preventative approach to practice through early identification and intervention.

It is recognised that in the current financial climate there is a need to work smarter and in partnership and the report provides examples of where this is working effectively.

This Annual Report of the Director of Social Services provides a snapshot of service activity undertaken throughout 2020/21. Further supporting information can be found below:

Accessing Further Information and Key Documents

Useful Documents

Reports to Social Services Scrutiny Committee - <http://democracy.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CId=1157&Year=0&LLL=0>

Council Corporate Plan – https://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/fileadmin/documents/Council/Policies_Strategies_Plans/Corporate_Plan_2018-22.pdf

Blaenau Gwent Council Budget Monitoring - <http://democracy.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CId=1148&Year=0&LLL=0>

Social Services Website – http://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/en/resident/health-wellbeing-social-care/Workforce_Development - <http://socialservicesblaenau-gwent.caerphilly.gov.uk/>

Useful Websites

Social Care Wales - <https://socialcare.wales>

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) - <https://careinspectorate.wales/>

Data Cymru - www.data.cymru

Dewis Wales - <https://www.dewis.wales>

Gwent Safeguarding - <https://www.gwentsafeguarding.org.uk/en/Home.aspx>

Public Service Board - <http://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/council/partnerships/partnership-working/>

South East Wales Safeguarding Children's Board - www.sewsc.org.uk

Providing Feedback

Social Services welcomes feedback on the Annual Report of the Director of Social Services. Your views are important to us. Please contact us if you would like to give feedback on the plan or if you require this document in a different format e.g. large print, Braille, audio version, etc.

Fersiwn Gymraeg

Yn unol â Chynllun Iaith Gymraeg y Cyngor, bydd fersiwn Gymraeg o Adroddiad Blynyddol y Cyfarwyddwr Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol ar gael ar wefan y Cyngor.

Write to us:

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Visit our website: www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk

The Social Services Directorate is satisfied that the information given in this annual report is accurate based on the information available at the time of publication.

This annual report has been subject to an Equality Impact Assessment screening.



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Agenda Item 6

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: **7th October 2021**

Report Subject: **Children and Communities Grant**

Portfolio Holder: **Councillor John Mason, Executive Member Social Services**

Report Submitted by: **Tanya Evans, Head of Children's 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)
2.9.21	09.09.21	23.09.21			7.10.21	10.11.21		

1. Purpose of the Report

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on progress of the Children and Communities Grant (CCG) which sits under the Flexible Funding Programme which came into being April 2019.

2. Scope and Background

2.1 The Flexible Funding programme is the latest approach from Welsh Government (WG) to ensure different grants work together with the aim of providing greater local authority autonomy in service delivery, particularly around joint planning and commissioning of services to support better outcomes. This extra freedom aims to allow for a more strategic approach in delivering early intervention, prevention and support.

2.1.1 The seven programmes that sit under the Children and Communities Grant are:

1. Families First
2. Flying Start
3. Childcare and Play
4. Communities for Work Plus (CfW+)
5. Legacy Fund
6. Promoting Positive Engagement for Young People at Risk of Offending
7. St David's Day Fund

2.1.2 Welsh Government have issued clear Guidance for the delivery of each of the 7 programmes listed above. The budget allocation for each of the 7 programmes can be found under section 5.1 of this report.

2.1.3 In relation to the 7 programmes it is important to note that Communities for work plus (CfW+) is delivered by GAVO not the local authority. This situation is unique to Blaenau Gwent as the other 21 Local Authorities in Wales deliver this

programme in house. That said GAVO have been an active part of the CCG steering group.

2.1.4 This is the third update report presented to scrutiny in relation to the CCG.

2.1.5 This report will focus on

- how services continued to be delivered throughout the pandemic
- and progress made in relation to the CCG delivery plan.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

Option 1

- i. Consider the progress made to date on the Children and Communities grant
- ii. Note the CCG Steering Group continues to oversee and implement the delivery programme and provides an annual report on progress to scrutiny, executive and the new local arrangements to replace the Public Service Board.

Option 2

- i. Consider and **provide specific comments** on the progress made to date on the Children and Communities grant
- ii. Note the CCG Steering Group continues to oversee and implement the delivery programme and provides an annual report on progress to scrutiny, executive and the new local arrangements to replace the Public Service Board.

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

Council Priorities

4.1 The programmes under the CCG focuses on early intervention prevention and support. As such they will support the following priorities outlined under the corporate plan

- To work with people to make sure they have a say in achieving what matters to them
- To intervene early to prevent problems from becoming greater
- To work with our partners including Aneurin Bevan University Health Board and neighbouring authorities to deliver integrated responsive care and support
- To promote and facilitate new ways of delivering health and social care involving key partners and our communities
- To develop a partnership approach to reducing and alleviating the impacts of Poverty

5. Implications Against Each Option

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

Figure 1 below outlines the total grant money aligned to each grant for 21/22.

Figure 1

Programme	Budget
Flying Start	£2,234,096
Families First	£1,143,183
Communities 4 Work Plus	£862,600
Legacy Fund	£464,465
Promoting Positive Engagement for YP	£148,016
Childcare and Play	£75,391
St David's Day Fund	£29,428

The CCG steering group meets on a bimonthly basis and receives regular financial information which ensures the grant money is maximised.

5.2 *Risk including Mitigating Actions*

Risk 1 Grants stopping

As with all grant funded projects there is a risk of the grant stopping and services being withdrawn. If this occurred the early needs of children and families would not be met and inevitably escalate requiring statutory interventions.

To mitigate against this each of the programmes under the CCG are supporting families to become more self-determining, drawing on their own naturally occurring support networks. The programmes also work closely with the third sector who also offer preventative services.

5.3 *Legal*

There are no legal issues relating to this report.

5.4 *Human Resources*

All Staff delivering the programmes under the CCG are on 12 month fixed term contracts. These are renewed each year. However many staff have been on fixed term contracts from many years and will have accrued employment rights. This will have a significant impact on the local authority if the CCG grant ended.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 ***Performance Information and Data***

6.1.1 **How services continued to be delivered throughout the pandemic**

The CCG steering group continued to meet regularly throughout the pandemic. During the early days of the pandemic Welsh Government helpfully issued guidance which stated that CCG programme staff could be used to ensure frontline services were supported and protected. This arrangement continued until September 2020.

6.1.2 **Families First**

At the start of the pandemic all families open to Families First were RAG rated. All those families that were deemed to be RED continued to have face to face visits following robust risk assessment and use of PPE. Virtual contact was maintained with all AMBER and GREEN cases. There is no doubt that this early proactive approach prevented needs from escalating during the pandemic and beyond. Some Families First staff were seconded to work alongside the statutory childcare teams working with children at risk of coming into care and children on the child protection register. All secondments have now ended and services have fully resumed including parenting groups.

6.1.3 **Flying start**

Flying Start also RAG rated their cases, however none of the Flying start health visitors undertook face to face visiting during the early stages of the pandemic as many of them were redeployed to hospitals. To counter this the flying start support workers supported extensive numbers of children and families via Social Media whereby over 1500 users were accessing information, advice and guidance through daily updates via their face book pages and website. Activity packs were also delivered to houses to support parents to continue to develop speech and language skills which is one of the core aims of the flying start programme. The team also produced a number of webinaire on many aspects of parenting. A small number of Flying Start Staff were seconded to adult social services to support adults to remain in the community. These secondments have now ended and all services have now fully resumed.

6.1.4 **Childcare and Play**

The Childcare settings managed by the local authorities remained open throughout the pandemic and in the early stages provided child care to the most vulnerable children and children of key workers. Over all 63% of all child care settings remained open across the board this included local authority/private nurseries and child minders. WG issued many grants to support this sector to ensure they remained sustainable. These grants were expertly managed by the small child care support team. All settings are now fully open and functioning with only a very small number who did not reopen following the early stages of the pandemic.

6.1.5 **Communities for Work Plus (CfW+)**

This programme saw a huge impact on local communities due to a reduction in the numbers of people who were supported into work in the first wave of the pandemic for obvious reasons. However, services continued to be developed in particular the recruitment of a Mental Health Support Worker (MHSW). It has been reported 40 new referrals made to the MHSW and with the support of the MHSW 24 of those referrals have been referred back into employability support services. The MHSW has completed a total of 122 sessions.

6.1.6 **Legacy Fund**

Legacy funds a number of posts that sit in the other programmes under the CCG. These include the Dads workers in Flying Start and the social workers in schools posts. Also it funds a contribution to the citizens advice beaurau. Importantly it also funded 2 workers to be seconded to the locality teams that were set up at the start of the pandemic with the aim of supporting the people of Blaenau Gwent with low level needs for example shopping, picking up medication and sign posting to other services. There is no doubt that the work of the locality teams dealt with very low level needs to prevent them from escalating.

6.1.7 **Promoting Positive Engagement for Young People at Risk of Offending**

This programme includes projects such as the Youth Offending Service REACH programme, the Children Looked After reparation worker and Phoenix Youth Respect Project (3rd Sector-led Young Person's Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Project). Throughout the pandemic service delivery was done virtually by remote ways of working. The main priority has been to support children's well-being; this has led to the delivery of well-being packs through the Positive Futures Programme.

6.1.8 **St David's Day Fund**

This fund is specifically used to support care leavers. During the pandemic the fund has been used to provide emergency finances for access to food and/or utilities, provide financial support to ensure tenancies are protected, access to the internet and an internet equipped devices, financial assistance for travel to visit family members. The 14 plus team who are responsible for managing this fund continued to visit all care leavers face to face during the pandemic to ensure their needs were met and they were safe.

6.1.9 **Progress made in relation to the CCG delivery plan.**

Each year the local authority has to send a delivery plan into Welsh Government. Within this is an action plan which the CCG steering group monitors to ensure progress throughout the year

The Action Plan with updates can be seen under **Appendix 1**. Good progress has been made on these actions considering we are still dealing with a pandemic.

6.2 ***Expected outcome for the public***

The public can expect the programmes delivered under the CCG to meet the requirements as laid out from Welsh Government.

All of the programmes focus on early intervention. Prevention and support

6.3 ***Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)***

The CCG guidance requires local authority to set out how they intend to engage with and involve local communities and use their responses to inform their long term vision and delivery plans. All of the programmes under the CCG have systems in place to gather feedback on services being delivered. Some programmes are also using social media to support with this from example flying Start have a face book to promote the service and receive feedback.

6.4 ***Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)***

The CCG Steering group will ensure the delivery plan for 20/21 encompasses the five was of working under the future generation act which includes planning for the long term.

6.5 ***Preventative focus***

One of the primary aims of the programmes delivered under the CCG is to prevent needs from escalating. This not only relates to preventing families requiring the interventions from Statutory Services but also working with families to support them of poverty via routes to employment.

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

As part of the work going forward the Local authority will need to demonstrate how we ensure the programmes under the CCG grant is aligning with the well-being objectives of the Public Services Board and the aims of other key partners and how evidence from the well-being plans and needs assessments have been incorporated. It is important to demonstrate that this grant is providing additional support for the most disadvantaged.

6.7 ***Integration (across service areas)***

The strategic use of grants review includes all service areas and the work undertaken to date aims to bring improved organisational sight of grant funding to maximise this funding stream.

6.8 ***Decarbonisation and Reducing Carbon Emissions***

The workforce who deliver the programmes under the CGG have adopted the agile working policy of the council which will have a positive impact on car emissions as staff are now able to work from home to undertake paperwork and do not have to travel to the office.

6.9 **Socio Economic Duty Impact Assessment**

All programmes that sit under CCG work with families who are subject to socio economic disadvantages for example, low income, material and area deprivation. All programmes work towards addressing these disadvantages.

6.10 **Equality Impact Assessment**

The CCG programmes work with many children and families who have protected characteristics.

The overarching vision of the CCG's seven core programmes is to support the needs of the most vulnerable children and adults in our communities through a range of early intervention, prevention and support mechanisms. With the aim of building resilient individuals, resilient families and resilient communities.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1 Welsh Government require quarterly reporting on progress. This will include reporting on outcomes from April 2020 under the new framework being developed by Welsh Government

In addition the CCG steering group will oversee the delivery of the programmes and provide an annual report to CLT scrutiny, executive and the PSB

Background Documents / Electronic Links

Appendix 1 – Action Plan

Appendix 1



Updated Action
Plan 2122.docx

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CCG Action Plan 21/22

No	Action	How	Update
1	<p>Ensure there is a common outcomes based approach to delivering interventions across families first and flying start</p>	<p>All Teams to ensure they have a nominated mentor who will attend the 6 weekly mentors group</p> <p>Ensure families first and flying start have monthly reflective practice sessions to discuss how the outcomes approach has been embedded in practice.</p> <p>Demonstrate and take responsibility for embedding the outcomes based approach in practice</p>	<p>Flying Start and Families First staff have had training on the 3 elements of training</p> <p>Mentors have been appointed for both programmes</p> <p>Families First Team Manager has been attending the 6 weekly Mentors group facilitated by Loredana Moruz (Service Manager). Families First Team Leads have also been invited to and will be attending the Mentors groups as of 9th September.</p> <p>Families First hold mandatory reflective practice sessions on a monthly basis. These sessions are facilitated by Team Manager and Clinical Psychologist on an alternative basis whereby members of the Team are given the opportunity to bring cases to discuss, share ideas, reflect on what is working/isn't working/what is important to the family and how best to support the family to achieve their identified outcomes.</p> <p>Families First paperwork currently being reviewed to become strengths based.</p> <p>Supervision is used to help support workers reflect on their practice, to reinforce an outcomes based approach when discussing families including the</p>

			<p>'what matters question' . This is then reinforced during monthly reflective practice sessions.</p> <p>Team Managers are due to attend the Vanguard training this month.</p> <p>All staff within Families First have completed the Collaborative Communication training which is mandatory.</p>
2	<p>Ensure the administrative support across the programmes is efficient and proportionate</p>	<p>Complete phase 2 review of support to CCG programmes for Coordination, Finance, Performance and Contract Management</p>	<p>New model for coordinating administrative duties implemented in April 2021, which includes a streamlined approach to supporting all 6 internal CCG programmes.</p> <p>A review of structure for CCG support team has also been undertaken and the provision of a deputy manager role has been agreed as part of the existing staff's roles and responsibilities.</p> <p>Contract management duties have been allocated to now include all Legacy and PPE funded projects.</p> <p>A full review for Families First and Flying Starts reporting requirements is scheduled in September. Recommendations and proposed developments will be taken to the CCG Board for sign off.</p>
4	<p>Ensure a consistent approach to the way in which all programmes under the CCG engage and participate with children and families</p>	<p>Developmental of a central engagement tool which will capture all engagement and participation activity across all the programmes</p> <p>Monitor the tool in terms of its usage and attached outcomes.</p>	<p>Engagement calendar has been developed and implemented. Monthly reminders are set for each programme to contribute into.</p>

	using the service to help shape it for the future		<p>Engagement and Participation has become a standard agenda item for the CCG Board which provides full updates on developments.</p> <p>Any new additions to the calendar are shared with the Corporate Engagement Calendar on a monthly basis.</p>
5	CCG and the HSG to work in a seamless fashion, providing integrated services where appropriate	Review the commissioning arrangements which exists between the CCG and HSG	Not started.
6	Implement the new outcomes framework provide by Welsh government	<p>Provide a workshop to ensure the CCG steering group and programme leads understand the new outcomes framework (once established)</p> <p>The programme leads to work with the central admin team to ensure systems are in place to capture the evidence to report on the outcomes framework to WG</p>	<p>Welsh Government have yet to provide outcomes framework.</p> <p>A Locally developed framework been implemented to measure and monitor progress linked to the programmes intended outcomes.</p>
7	Review of commissioned services to ensure value for money, no duplication and good outcomes provided	Report to CCG group	Full review of Legacy commissioned projects is currently underway. CCG board will agree services to be provided post April 2022 following CCG Board in September 2021.
8	Ensure flexibility within the CCG grant to support and promote joint planning and commissioning to make more effective use of the funding in pursuit of the constituent	<p>Continue to implement the CCG financial Management procedure to ensure any underspends are used in line with the CCG guidelines and supports the priorities within the CCG Delivery Plan and achieves value for money This could include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - New demands on service - A new programme initiative - Identified gaps in service 	<p>Financial management procedure used as the basis for the review of the Legacy Fund, focusing on outcomes.</p> <p>No underspend has been identified at this point of the year which requires realigning, however there has been notification from WG that the CCG are to receive additional funds as part of the COVID</p>

	programmes' aims and objectives.	- Potential overspends within current service delivery	recovery, therefore this process will be fully adopted to ensure the intended flexibility of the grant is honoured.
9	Monitor the a high level performance framework to include indicators from the 7 programmes which will be used to monitor the success of the programmes in relation to the outcomes they achieve	All programmes to report Quarterly on the framework	<p>First set of reporting took place in April 2021 and 2020/21 full annual outturn was presented to the CCG Board in May 2021.</p> <p>Quarters 1 and 2/Term 1 (Flying Start) performance updates scheduled for October CCG Board.</p>
10	Review the new approaches to service delivery due to the re-provisioning of the legacy funding to ensure the new approaches are achieving the desired outcomes		<p>Findings from the Community Impact Assessment (CIA) have been reviewed in order to identify the needs and demands falling out of it and how they link to the Community element of the CCG.</p> <p>A Legacy Working Group has been established to take forward and lead on the development of the future of the Legacy Fund.</p> <p>The Strategic Lead for Legacy developed a survey which looked to link the Legacy projects to other CCG programmes and the work of the CIA.</p> <p>Full outcomes reports for existing projects to be presented in next CCG Board meeting scheduled for September 2021 and will inform the future delivery of the fund beyond March 2022.</p>

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: **7th October 2021**

Report Subject: **Proposal to develop a Blaenau Gwent My Support Team (MyST)**

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

Report Submitted by: **Tanya Evans, Head of Children's 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)
1.9.21	16/09/21	23.09.21			7.10.21	10.11.21		

1. Purpose of the Report

The purpose of this report is to outline the proposal and business case to develop a Blaenau Gwent My Support Team (MyST) instead of the current joint MyST with Monmouthshire.

2. Scope and Background

A report was presented to Social Services Scrutiny Committee in September 2018 recommending the establishment of a joint My Support Team (MyST) between Blaenau Gwent and Monmouthshire. Scrutiny supported this proposal as did Executive.

2.1 To remind members the MyST provides a multi-disciplinary intensive therapeutic fostering service for Children looked After. The Team work intensively with children currently in residential care with the aim of bringing them back to live closer to Blaenau Gwent and be placed with foster carers or family members. The Team also works with those children in care who present with complex needs and are at risk of going into residential care to prevent this from happening.

2.1.2 In the summer of 2018 a bid was made via the Children and Families Partnership Board for Integrated Care Fund (ICF) grant money to develop a Gwent wide approach in developing a joint multi-disciplinary intensive therapeutic fostering service for Children Looked After. As Torfaen and Caerphilly already had a MyST in place the Children's Partnership Board agreed Blaenau Gwent and Monmouthshire should be the next authorities to develop a joint team. Once this was established Newport would then establish their team.

2.1.3 The Blaenau Gwent / Monmouthshire MyST became operational in May 2019. This report will evidence the work which has been done during the past 2 years in relation to: -

1. Numbers of Blaenau Gwent children MyST have supported to move out of residential care.

2. The numbers of Blaenau Gwent children MyST have prevented going into residential care.
3. The number of Blaenau Gwent Psychological practice consultations undertaken by MyST
4. The actual cost savings made by MyST
5. The cost avoidance as a result of MyST

2.1.4 Monmouthshire CBC is also proposing to develop their own MyST and at the time of writing this report their stand-alone team has now been agreed through their democratic process.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

3.1 **Option 1 (preferred option)**

For scrutiny members to acknowledge the positive work MyST have undertaken and support the development of a Blaenau Gwent MyST to the Executive Committee

3.2 **Option 2**

For scrutiny members to acknowledge the positive work MyST have undertaken but **not** support the development of a Blaenau Gwent MyST to the Executive Committee

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

4.1 The work of the MyST supports the achievement of the following priorities for social services under the corporate plan

- To intervene early to prevent problems from becoming greater
- To work with our partners including Aneurin Bevan University Health Board and neighbouring authorities to deliver integrated responsive care and support
- To promote and facilitate new ways of delivering health and social care involving key partners and our communities

The My Support Team is also a key part of the Safe Reduction of Children Looked after Strategy 2020 - 2025

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

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

5.1.1 When initially set up the Joint Blaenau Gwent / Monmouthshire MyST was funded by ICF grant money. This grant money was time limited to 18 Months as it needed to move to Newport to enable them to develop their MyST. Therefore, from April 21/22 Blaenau Gwent have been funding half the costs of the joint team from our core budget. This has been possible by using the savings made from the residential budget.

5.1.2 The Blaenau Gwent contribution to Monmouthshire for hosting the team for 21/22 is £240,000.

The following information will demonstrate the actual savings and cost avoidance the MyST has achieved during 19/20 and 20/21.

Figure 1

Cost Savings in 2019-2020	Cost Avoidance in 2019-2020
Child A - £184,052.57	Child A- £83,169.93
Child B - £27,283.57	Child B - £70,150.01
Child C - £83,852.57	
Total Saving - £295,188.71	Total Cost Avoidance - £153,319.94

For clarity the cost savings made for the 3 children were made as they were all in residential care and then moved with the support of MyST to live with foster carers with therapeutic support. The 2 children where costs were avoided was due to the work of the MyST preventing these children entering residential care.

Figure 2

Cost Savings in 2020-2021	Cost Avoidance in 2020-2021
Child A - £218,119	Child A £37,355
Child B- £97,080	Child B £66,957
Child C- £174,449	Child C- £24,886
Child D - £143,083	Child D - £41,482
Child E - £174,666	
Child F- £8,004	
Child G - £75,564	
Child H - £3,794	
Total Saving - £894,759	Total Cost Avoidance - £170,680

The annual cost of a Blaenau Gwent MyST would be £503,467.

5.1.3 The costs of a full Blaenau Gwent team are outlined below. This is based on the forecast that Monmouthshire have provided for the joint Blaenau Gwent Monmouthshire Team for 21/22 but also includes the contribution to regional costs which have to date been met by transformation grant money which is due to end March 2022.

<u>Account</u>	<u>21/22 Forecast</u>
Salaries	329,067.00
Contribution to Regional MyST posts	41,000.00
Standby Allowance	16,000.00
Travel Claims Allowance	10,000.00
Accommodation	15, 000.00
Equipment Purchases	3,500.00
Professional And Specialist Fees (Psychology)	55,900.00
Mobile Telephone Call Charges	1,500.00
IT Hardware	2,500.00
Advertising	1,000.00
Administration	12,000.00
Training Charges	10,000.00
Direct Work with Young People	6,000.00
Totals	503,467.00

5.1.4 Based on the fact that we are currently paying £240,000 to Monmouthshire this would require a further £263,467 to be found from children’s service core budget

5.1.5 The additional costs will be funded by cost reductions in the Residential Children’s budget which are expected to result from the work of the MyST in reducing the number of children requiring residential care in future.

Figure 3 shows the financial benefits the preventative work in Children’s Services has had on the Residential Children’s budget between 2018/19 and 2020/21.

Figure 3 Residential Children’s Budget

	Budget	Outturn	Underspend /overspend
18/19	2,592,000.00	3,070,474.00	Overspend 478,474.00
19/20	2,678,430 .00	2,548,152.00	Underspend 130,278.00
20/21	2,703,250.00	2,041,704.00	Underspend 661,546.00

Figure 3 shows how the residential children budget has shifted from an overspend position to a significant underspend position over the last three years. This is a direct result of having a MyST and our 14 plus team working hard to move children out of residential care and closer to Blaenau Gwent.

- 5.1.6 The establishment of a Blaenau Gwent MyST Team would continue this positive work and increase capacity within Blaenau Gwent to address the backlog of referrals. Based upon previous outcomes it is anticipated that the work of the team would decrease the overall numbers of children in residential care by 2 children each year over the next 3years.
- 5.1.7 The current average weekly cost of a Blaenau Gwent child to be in residential placement is £4000 a week or £208,000 per year. If the goal of bring 2 children in residential care back to Blaenau Gwent is achieved this will save the authority £416,000 per year (and offset the additional cost of the team).
- 5.1.8 During 2020/21, 12 children were admitted into residential care. It is fair to say that due to the complex needs of these children some of them needed this provision at this time. However, if the MyST team had been able to work with some of these children before their needs escalated then fewer children would have needed this provision. In 2020/21 the joint team were able to work with four children to create a cost avoidance of £170K through the joint team, with a full team for Blaenau Gwent then we anticipate that cost avoidance will at least double to £340K a year.
- 5.1.9 In summary therefore, if agreed, this invest to safe proposal will be funded by the expected savings resulting from a reduction in 2 residential placements per annum. Reductions in placements and cost avoidance exceeding those required to fund the proposal will be factored in to the Council’s Medium Term Financial Strategy to support the Bridging the Gap programme.

Figure 4: Estimated Financial Impact of Establishing a BG Myst Team:

	Year 1 £	Year 2 £	Year 3 £
Full Cost of BG Myst Team	503,467	503,467	503,467
Current Cost of Joint Team	(240,000)	(240,000)	(240,000)
Additional Cost of BG Myst Team	263,467	263,467	263,467
Estimated Cost Reductions (2 placements per annum)	(416,000)	(832,000)	(1,248,000)
Estimated Financial Impact	(152,533)	(568,533)	(984,533)

The above highlights that the establishment of a BG MyST Team is estimated to achieve savings of £1m by year 3.

Risk including Mitigating Actions

Risk 1

Due to lack of capacity the MyST have held a waiting list this year. This poses 2 risks. Children remaining in residential care for longer than needed and children entering residential care because MyST were not able to offer preventative support.

Mitigation

The development of a Blaenau Gwent MyST will bring more capacity to work with Blaenau Gwent children to mitigate against these 2 risks

5.3 ***Legal***

The proposal of this report is in line with principles of the Social Services and Wellbeing Act 2014, in particular Part 2 of the codes of practice which outlines the general functions to which local authorities and Local Health Boards **must** have regard.

Part 2 of the code states the level of preventative services that local authorities provide or arrange **must** seek to promote the well-being of people who need care and support. The work of the MyST is clearly aligned to this requirement and evidence of this can be seen in the comments made by those who have used the service.

5.4 ***Human Resources***

If Blaenau Gwent have their own MyST the following new posts will have to be created

- Team Manager MyST
- X 3 therapeutic practitioners
- X 2 Young person's practitioners

A structure Chart has been included in **Appendix 1** which show where this new team will sit in the Childrens Services Structure

The Job Descriptions for these posts have already been developed as part of the joint team with Monmouthshire, however they will need to be subject the Blaenau Gwent job evaluation process.

6. Supporting Evidence

6.1 Performance Information and Data

6.1.1 The following information will outline why there is a need to establish a Blaenau Gwent MyST.

6.1.2 The following table shows the numbers of children that have entered residential care over the past 3 years

6.1.3 Figure :

Year	Number of children
18/19	9
19/20	7
20/21	12

6.1.4 You will note that despite the MyST being established in May 2019 and working intensively with 7 children to enable them to move out of residential care, the rate of children entering residential care during 20/21 nearly doubled from the previous year. The joint Blaenau Gwent/ Monmouthshire Team MyST did not have the capacity to work with these children prevent these children entering residential care.

6.1.5 During 20/21 Childrens Services have seen a significant increase in the level of risk taking behaviour and complex needs that children are presenting with. It is these children that require intensive therapeutic support which the MyST team could offer if their capacity was increased.

6.1.6 MyST work with only 15 children at any one time. This is the optimum number to ensure the quality and safety in managing the clinical risk with the level of intensity needed both in working hours and especially with the out of hours service. Increasing the numbers of children to 20 with an additional 2 staff has been tried in the region. However, the team started to experience a higher level of instability in the placements and burn out amongst the staff team due to the level and demands in working hours and the on call service. Therefore, the model of service delivery is tried and tested and for Blaenau Gwent to increase MyST capacity a Blaenau Gwent team needs to be developed

6.1.7 The **negative** impact of children entering residential care is significant. None of the 12 children who came into residential care in 20/21 were placed in Blaenau Gwent. Therefore, connections with their schools, peers, friends and communities were severed. Connections with family members became

much harder to maintain. There is significant research to demonstrate the outcomes for children in care are much poorer than the rest of the population. This is why it is critical to work hard and fast to return children to their family so long as it is safe to do so.

6.1.8 The following information provides evidence of what the exiting Blaenau Gwent/ Monmouthshire team has already achieved.

6.1.9 As previously mentioned the MyST became operational from May 2019. At this time Blaenau Gwent had 18 children in residential care. In August 2021 we now have 11 children in residential care.

6.1.10 **Numbers of Blaenau Gwent children the team have supported out of residential care.**

From May 2019- August 2021 MyST have successfully worked with 7 children to move them out of residential care into foster placements. At the heart of this work is the relationship the MyST workers build with the children and their support networks. The small numbers the MyST work with at any one time allows their work to be very intensive, providing 24/7 support to the child and their carers. It is this intensive support that has allowed these 7 children to move successfully in a planned way into foster care or return to their parents.

6.1.11 **The numbers of Blaenau Gwent children the team have supported to prevent children going into residential care**

From May 2019 – August 2021 MyST have worked intensively with 4 children whose foster placement was at high risk of breaking down. If the foster placement had broken down the only placements for these children would have been residential care. Providing hands on intensive 24/7 support to the child and foster carers has enabled these placements to remain stable, enabling the child to remain local and continue in the same schools and maintain contact with their family and friendship groups.

6.1.12 **The number of Blaenau Gwent practice consultations undertaken**

MyST provide practice consultations to Social Workers and Foster Carers when they are struggling to understand and support a child whose needs are starting to become complex. These consultations provide advice and guidance in managing emerging complex needs by trying new approaches when managing various risks/behaviours.

6.1.13 MyST have undertaken an evaluation of the consultations undertaken during 2020 -21. The full evaluation can be found under **Appendix 2**. In summary. During this period, 70 consultations took place. Of the 70 consultations, 13 of these consulted with MyST more than once. Out of the 70 consultations held 133 people attended.

6.1.14 The views and feedback from the children and young people, foster carers and professionals experiencing the service is critical to evidence the improved outcomes for our children looked after. Examples of the comments received are below

- Quote from Foster Carer
"We love the photo's and glad you captured those moments! We really appreciate everything you've done for us."
- A later quote from the same foster carer –
"The work that I did with you is still being very useful, thank you for that."
- Quote from Birth Mother
"If it wasn't for MyST home visits wouldn't have started yet. I'm really happy that she can visit. I really appreciate everything you've done for us."
- Quote from IFA Foster Carer
'As long term foster carers over 10 years we have found that having MyST on board has been invaluable in providing care for a child with such complex needs. Without MyST we would be floundering and doubting our ability to continue. The on call service has been crucial in providing consistency and stability in our care.'
- Quote from IFA Foster Carer
"MyST were great at listening and giving useful advice, I have been able to broaden my 'tool belt'"
- Quote from Birth Family Member
"Thank you for last night, I truly appreciate it, having someone to speak to really helps"
- Quote from Foster Carer
"A fresh pair of eyes from MyST was good to see a bigger picture"
- Quote from Foster Carer
'MyST came at the right time. When x was first with us we had support from elsewhere, but if MyST hadn't started working with us x wouldn't be here now'.
- Quote from Foster Carer
Working alongside MyST and being in regular contact with the team has allowed me to share my knowledge and ideas and I feel like a valued person within the child's support network. I feel listened to and that my skill set as a foster carer is appreciated"

6.2 **Expected outcome for the public**

The work of the MyST work to achieve the following outcomes for children

- Children placed closer to home which will enable sustained relationships with their families and friends
- Increased placement stability
- Improved school attendance
- Improved emotional wellbeing

6.3 ***Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)***

As part of the ongoing monitoring there will be consultation with the children and young people, foster carers and staff receiving a service from MyST

6.4 ***Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)***

The development of the service outlined in this report is aimed at enhancing and improving services for children looked after and young people in the longer term. Bringing children closer to home will enable them to form local support networks in their communities which will no doubt benefit them into the future

6.5 ***Preventative focus***

MyST aims to improve outcomes for children who have experienced multiple Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) and who have the most complex and challenging needs. If successful MyST interventions will reduce the use of expensive and sometimes ineffective out of area placements. MyST works in close alignment with the Gwent-wide attachment service, to achieve psychologically-informed environments, including an ACEs-informed workforce

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

MyST is an excellent example of how the Children and Families Partnership is working together to improve outcomes for children and young people who present with complex needs.

6.7 ***Integration (across service areas)***

MyST engages with the whole support network around the child. This includes school, youth workers and any community activities/clubs. The work undertaken to date by MyST has evidenced very close working relationships with schools both inside and outside of Blaenau Gwent.

6.8 ***Decarbonisation and Reducing Carbon Emissions***

The new MyST team will adopt the councils agile working policy which will mean there will not be a requirement to travel to an office base each day but work from home for part of the week. This will play a part in reducing carbon emissions

6.9a ***Socio Economic Duty Impact Assessment***

MyST works with children who live in some of the most deprived areas of Blaenau Gwent that have experienced many adverse childhood experiences. The impact assessment has been completed and is attached under **appendix 3**.

6.9b. ***Equality Impact Assessment***

The development of a full BG MyST does not require a full impact assessment as it will not adversely impact on the community of Blaenau Gwent

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1 The following will monitor the MyST arrangements

- The Children and Families Partnership Board
- The Regional Partnership Board
- The Regional MyST Management Board.
- The Project is included as part of the action plan in the Blaenau Gwent Children Looked After reduction strategy which will be monitored on a quarterly basis

Background Documents /Electronic Links

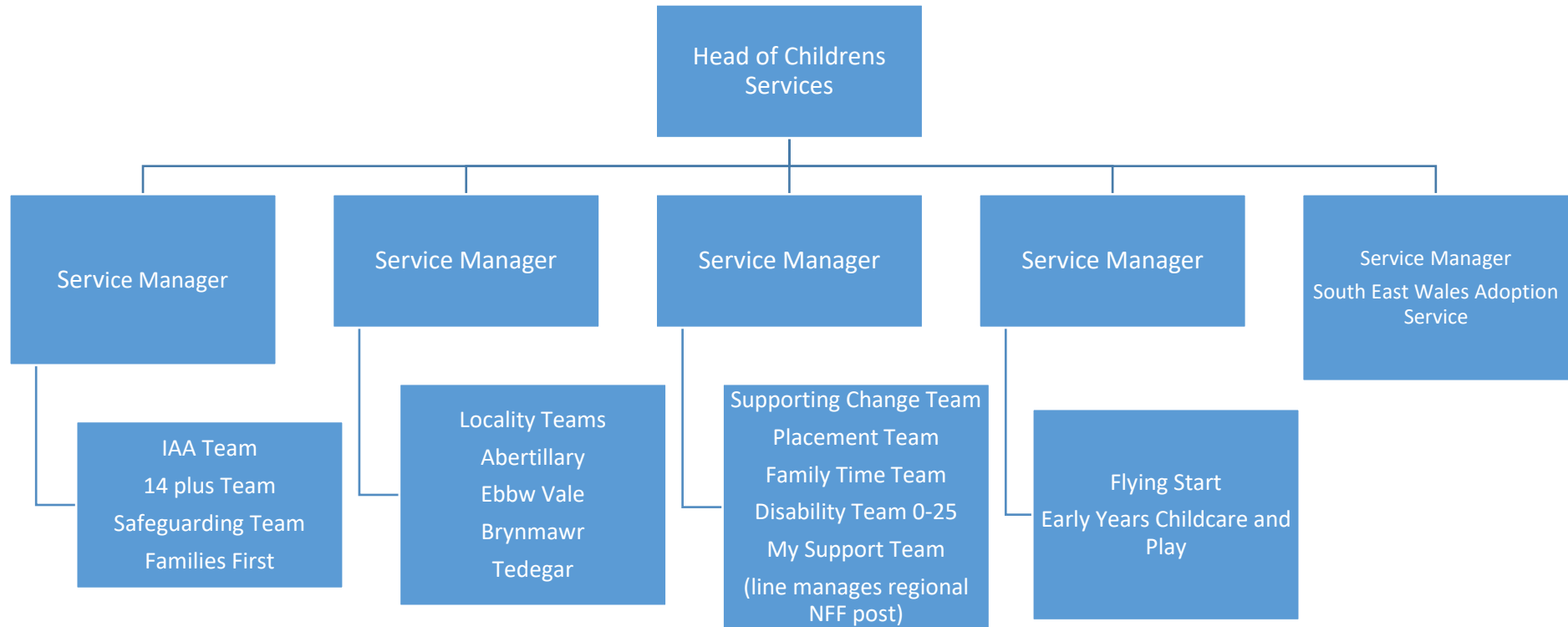
Appendix 1 – Children’s Staffing Structure

Appendix 2 – Consultation Evaluation

Appendix 3 – Socio-Economic Duty

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Childrens Structure May 21



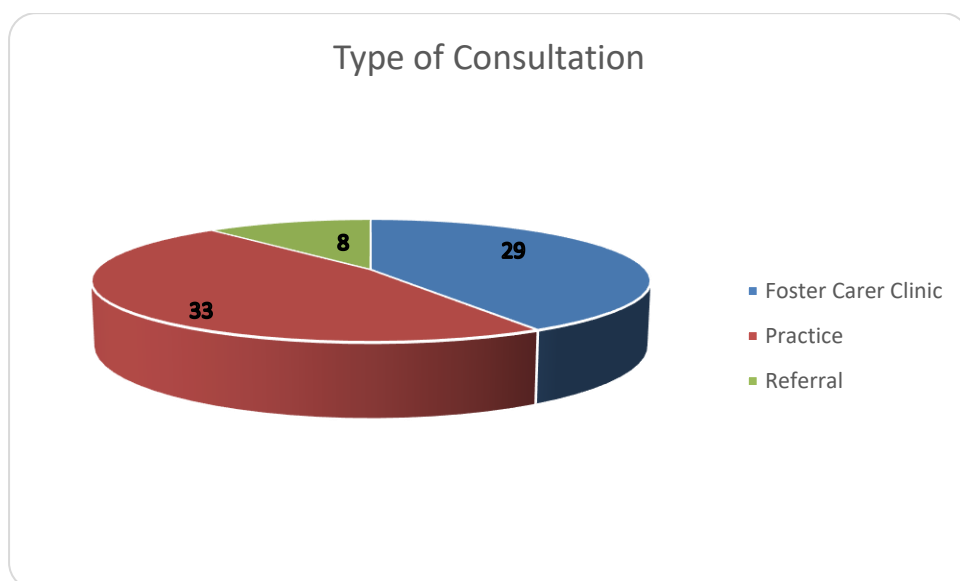
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Blaenau Gwent - Monmouthshire MyST Consultation Service
Evaluation Audit 2020 - 2021

Alongside our intensive placement-based work, MyST aims to be as accessible and supportive as possible to Blaenau Gwent and Monmouthshire young people who are at the Edge of Care or Looked After. Part of this work involves providing consultation to foster carers, parents, kinship carers, social workers and direct workers to help to understand young people’s psychological needs and develop ideas about ways to meet these needs. All consultees are asked to give us their feedback anonymously so that we can understand more about the impacts that the consultations have, what works well and how they might be improved.

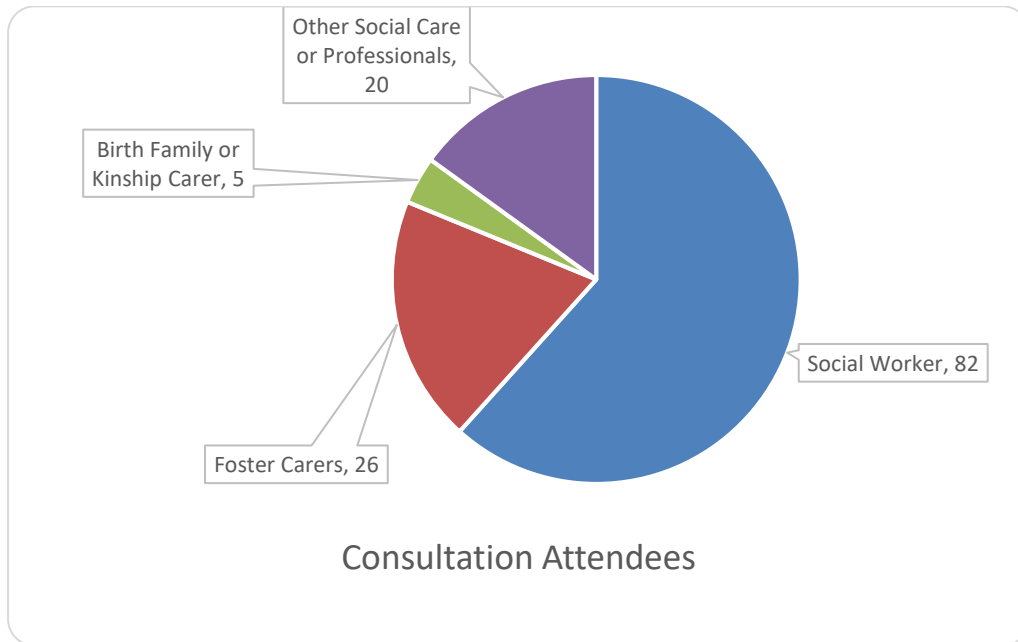
This audit looked at the completed evaluation forms from all those who returned them between 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021. During this period, 70 consultations took place. Of 70 consultations, 13 of these consulted with us more than once. Out of the 70 consultations held 133 people attended, 34 of these people returned an evaluation form.

Our consultation criteria is split into three categories these are, practice consultations (with professional colleagues to support their own practice with a child and family), foster carer clinic consultations and referral consultations (to discuss a referral into our intensive direct work service), the below graph demonstrates the number of each provided during the period.



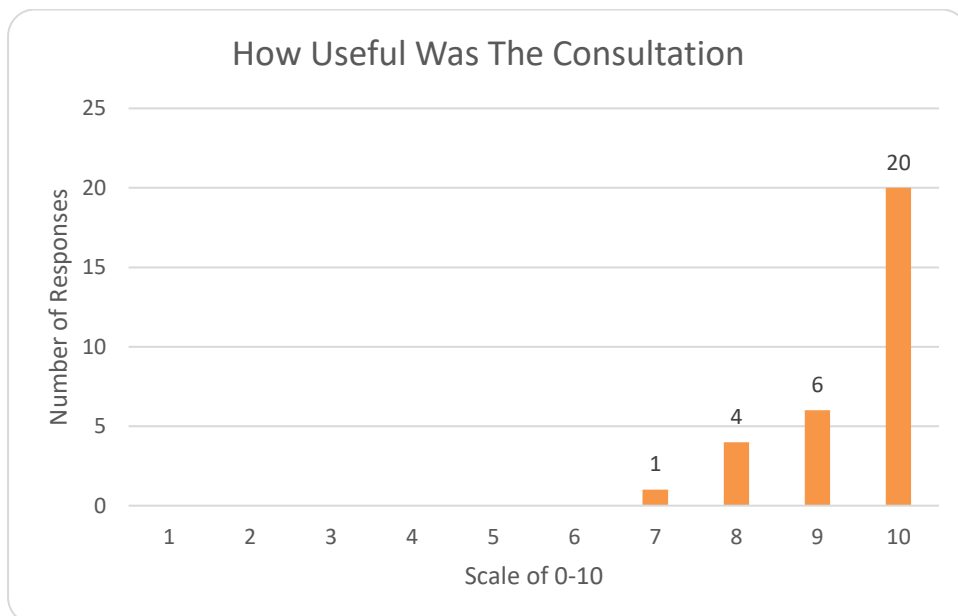
It is worth noting in addition to the 70 consultations that took place in regards to the above categories and additional 34 On-Going consultations took place as part of an intensive workload, carried out usually by the services psychologist or manager.

It is usual for more than one person to attend each consultation of the 70 consultations provided there were 133 attendees; the graph demonstrates the breakdown of these attendees.



The evaluation forms asked attendees to answer the following two questions:

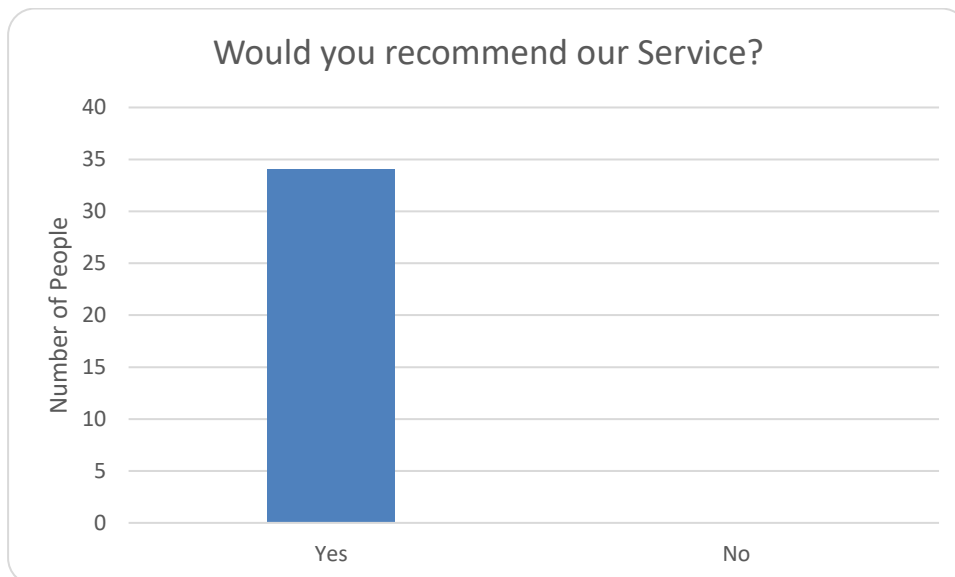
1. How useful was the consultation on a scale of 0-10? (0 being not at all and 10 being extremely useful) The following responses were given:



59% of attendees said their consultation was extremely valuable.

Gwasanaeth Bwrdd Partneriaeth Gwent ~ A Gwent Partnership Board Service

2. Would you recommend our service? The following responses were given:



100% of attendees said they would recommend our service.

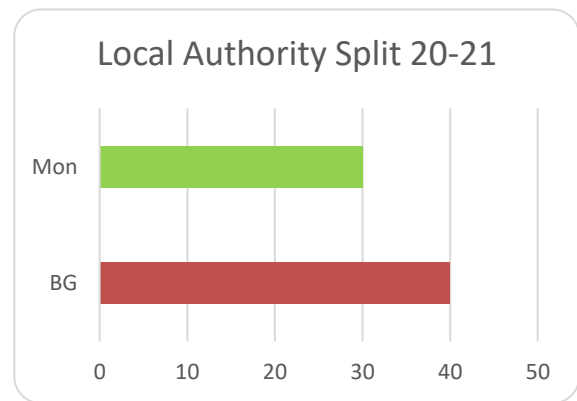
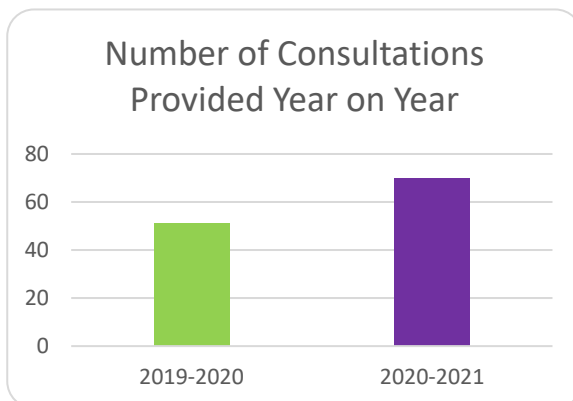
Below is an example of some of this year's qualitative feedback that was provided:

- Helpful to talk and helpful to have feedback about what they're doing and ideas about to what we're doing to refresh our learning.
- Can I say 11+? I feel so happy that I've spoken to you and less overwhelmed
- You were brilliant, that's really helped us. Loads of ideas now
- Nice to be able to discuss and get other ideas and know we're not on our own with it.
- The session was significant and useful as a support mechanism for the foster carers.
- useful and beneficial to have frank and open discussion and think about strategies and how best to support
- nice to discuss as touch on things not yet been thought of and see it with fresh eyes.
- Really enjoyed it, so helpful- brought up dimensions we'd not thought of and will help to work. Like it was holistic
- entirely helpful and useful for staff team - so good to marry up approaches and think about ideas. Thanks.
- really helpful to share ideas and also be reminded of my own skills to use.
- gained a really good insight into this young person in a very short space of time and feel you've got her and understood.
- Both MYST practitioners were extremely knowledgeable, welcoming of other professionals during the consultation, throughout the entire consultation I felt I was heard, supported and provided with recognition.

Gwasanaeth Bwrdd Partneriaeth Gwent ~ A Gwent Partnership Board Service

- It also provided me with reassurance that there is further support for myself to ensure that I am supporting in the most appropriate way to help the family identify/manage the complexities in their lives, help to implement new and more effective strategies and achieve change.
- The session gave me a clearer picture of how to work with this young person and I came away with more confidence in how I could support her and how the team around her could work. It was also good to understand that the way I have been working with her was correct. The hour flew!

Below figures, show the increase demand for consultations, since the start of the service in 2019, however it is important to remember that the service covers two boroughs, from the latest figures we can see the consultation service is being utilised more by the Blaenau Gwent borough.



Discussion

Given the pandemic, it has been an exceptionally difficult year for everybody. MyST’s priority during this time was to offer the same high quality support to our intensive casework, despite this we have still managed to carry out a large number of consultations. Due to the high number of attendees at these consultations, we are disappointed with the low number of feedback evaluations. It is notable that the pandemic brought about a shift to online consultation meetings and this may have influenced upon uptake and returns of evaluation feedback.

The feedback that has been provided is extremely positive. It is notable that there were no negative comments about the consultations.

Qualitative feedback confirms the consultations offer a space for discussion and to check, possibly reaffirm actions the care-givers took and evaluate these in a safe environment. It has been raised that MyST offer useful ideas and identify helpful pieces of work, which would benefit the young people and the carers. One attendee advised, “I feel so happy that I’ve spoken to you and less overwhelmed” this highlights the value the MyST consultation service offers to the local authority foster carers and social workers outside of our core objectives of the service.

Cariad Warrilow – Regional Systems & Resource Coordinator – MyST &

May 2021

Socio-economic Duty (Strategic Decisions Only)

Welsh Government’s [Socio-economic Duty](#) provides a framework to ensure tackling inequality of outcome is at the forefront of decision making.

Please consider how your proposal could affect the following groups:

- Single parents and vulnerable families
- People with low literacy/numeracy
- Pensioners
- Looked after children
- Homeless people
- Carers
- Armed Forces Community
- Students
- Single adult households
- People who have experienced the asylum system
- People of all ages leaving a care setting
- People living in the most deprived areas in Wales (WIMD)
- People involved in the criminal justice system
- People misusing substances

Socio Economic Disadvantages	Will the proposal have a positive, negative, or neutral impact?	How could you mitigate the negative impacts outlined?	Please highlight any evidence that has been considered (quantitative or qualitative)
<p>Low Income / Income Poverty <i>(cannot afford to maintain regular payments such as bills, food, clothing, transport etc.)</i></p>	<p>Positive impact</p>		<p>A Blaenau Gwent (BG) MyST will increase capacity to work with children to provide placement stability. This will assist low income families in avoiding the need to visit their child/children in residential homes outside of Blaenau Gwent.</p>
<p>Low and/or No Wealth <i>(enough money to meet basic living costs and pay bills but have no savings to deal with any unexpected spends and no provisions for the future)</i></p>	<p>Positive impact</p>		<p>A BG MyST will increase capacity to work with children to provide placement stability. This will avoid families in spending money in court proceedings and visiting their child/children in</p>

			Residential homes outside of Blaenau Gwent.
Material Deprivation <i>(unable to access basic goods and services i.e., financial products like life insurance, repair/replace broken electrical goods, warm home, hobbies etc.)</i>	Positive Impact		A BG MyST will increase capacity to work with children to provide placement stability, which will in turn improve families personal outcomes and ensure their income is not used for expensive travel to see their children
Area Deprivation <i>(where you live (rural areas), where you work (accessibility of public transport) Impact on the environment?)</i>	Positive Impact		A BG MyST will increase capacity to work with children to provide placement stability. which will in turn improve their personal outcomes and integrating positively in their communities. This will cause less disruption for families.
Socio-economic Background <i>(social class i.e., parents' education, employment and income)</i>	Positive Impact		A BG MyST will increase capacity to work with children to provide placement stability which will in turn improve their personal outcomes, resulting in

			families using their income positively on their family rather than for travel, etc to see their child/children in residential care.
<p>Socio-economic Disadvantage <i>(What cumulative impact will the proposal have on people or groups because of their protected characteristic(s) or vulnerability or because they are already disadvantaged)</i></p>	<p>Positive Impact</p>		<p>A BG MyST will increase capacity to work with children to provide placement stability which will in turn improve their personal outcomes like attending school, developing positive family/peer relationships, integrating positively in their communities. This will mitigate against existing disadvantages.</p>

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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: **7th October 2021**
Report Subject: **Forward Work Programme: 18th November 2021**
Portfolio Holder: **Cllr John Mason, Executive Member Social Services**
Report Submitted by: **Cllr Steve Thomas, Chair of the 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)
x	x	23.09.21			07.10.21			

1. **Purpose of the Report**
 - 1.1 To present to Members the Social Services Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme for the Meeting on 18th November 2021 for discussion and agreement.
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 revised Corporate Plan, corporate documents and supporting business plans.
 - 2.3 Effective work programmes are essential to ensure that the work of scrutiny makes a positive impact upon the Council's delivery of services.
 - 2.4 The Committee's Forward Work Programme was agreed in June 2021, recognising the fluidity of the document to enable the Committee to respond to urgent and emerging issues, and included timescales when reports will be considered by the Committee. The work programme is managed and implemented by the Scrutiny and Democratic Officer under the direction of the Chair and Committee.
 - 2.5 The forward work programme for the forthcoming meeting will be presented to Committee on a 6 weekly cycle in order that Members can consider the programme of work; request information is included within the reports, as appropriate and / or make amendments to the work programme.
3. **Options for Recommendation**
 - 3.1 **Option 1:** The Scrutiny Committee consider the Forward Work Programme for the meeting 18th November 2021, and

- Make any amendments to the topics scheduled for the meetings;
- Suggest any additional invitees that the committee requires to fully consider the reports; and
- Request any additional information to be included with regards to the topics to be discussed.

3.2 **Option 2:** The Scrutiny Committee agree the Forward Programme for the meeting 18th November 2021, as presented.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

- Appendix 1 – Forward Work Programme – Meeting on 18th November 2021

Social Services Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme

Date	Scrutiny Topic	Purpose	Lead Officer	Executive / Council Meeting
Meeting: Thursday 18 th November 2021 Deadline: Thursday 4 th November 2021	Regional Partnership Board	Performance Monitoring Members to be informed of the decisions taken by the Regional Partnership Board	Damien McCann	Executive – 15.12.21
	National Adoption Service Annual Report	Performance Monitoring Members to be informed about National and Regional progress of Adoption services	Tanya Evans	Executive Information – 15.12.21
	Future model of assistive technology / telecare provision	Performance Monitoring Members to be informed of proposals to provide an enhanced telecare / assistive technology offer to promote independence and meet personal outcomes	Alyson Hoskins	Executive – 15.12.21
	Director of Social Services Quarter 1 and 2 update	Performance Monitoring Members to receive the quarterly update of the Director of Social Services Annual report.	Damien McCann	Executive – 15.12.21
INFORMATION ITEM				
	Independent Reviewing Officer Report	Information For Members information.	Tanya Evans	

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