

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