

**COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT**

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

**SUBJECT: SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 7<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER, 2021**

**REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICER**

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

Councillors: Councillor K. Rowson (Vice-Chair)

D. Bevan  
G. Davies  
P. Edwards  
K. Hayden  
W. Hodgins  
J. Holt  
M. Moore  
G. Paulsen  
T. Sharrem  
B. Summers  
T. Smith

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

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

<p><b>No. 2</b></p>	<p><b><u>APOLOGIES</u></b></p> <p>An apology for absence was received from Councillor G. Collier.</p>	
<p><b>No. 3</b></p>	<p><b><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></b></p> <p>The following declaration of interest was raised:-</p> <p>Councillor G. Paulsen Item No. 6 – Children and Communities Grant</p> <p>Councillor Wayne Hodgins also raised a declaration of interest in the meeting as some of his clients may be service users of the Social Services Directorate.</p>	
<p><b>No. 4</b></p>	<p><b><u>SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u></b></p> <p>The Minutes of the Social Services Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 22<sup>nd</sup> July, 2021 were submitted; whereupon:-</p> <p>A Member referred to the suggestion raised by the Corporate Director that a report could be presented in relation to social work pay and incentives being offered by other Authorities for consideration. The Member noted that this was not on the Forward Work Programme for the November meeting and asked when the report could be expected.</p> <p>The Corporate Director Social Services advised that the report could be presented to the next meeting.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the report be presented to a future meeting.</p> <p>The Committee FURTHER AGREED, subject to the foregoing that the Minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	

No. 5

**ANNUAL REPORT OF THE  
DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES**

Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director Social Services.

The Corporate Director Social Services referred to the Annual Report of the Director of Social Services 2020/2021 which was detailed in Appendix 1 and invited questions from Members.

A Member referred to the priority 'to develop alternative models of support that promotes independence and supports well-being outcomes' and in particular individuals 25 years and over. The Member advised that many of these young people are keen to get back to normality and asked what plans are in place going forward to get service users over 25 years old back into the community out of their homes where they have been since the start of the pandemic.

The Corporate Director Social Services referred to the presentation provided at a previous meeting in relation to the pressures in the social and health care system. It was informed that day care staff were supporting services in other areas as a result of staff shortages in frontline services due to the pandemic. Therefore, some services were not operating as they would have before the pandemic and a ration day service had been developed to fit an individual's needs. The Corporate Director added that there was a need to establish a model for day services facilities as the Department could not return to pre-pandemic ways as Social Services had an obligation to protect the most vulnerable in our communities and needed to comply with Welsh Government risk assessment to stop the spread of COVID-19 which would include social distancing restrictions. It was added that once this review had been undertaken it would be presented to Members for consideration, however the Corporate Director stated that the pandemic was continuing and there was a need for risk assessments to be undertaken to maintain some social distancing in our facilities.

It was noted that during the pandemic services have been offered virtually and on a 1-2-1 basis and service users had welcomed this contact and it was hoped that this interaction could be continued. There would be consultation undertaken with families and service users to identify their needs.

The Member welcomed the work undertaken by Social Services, however he further asked if projects were being sought with community clubs and organisations to get these individuals outdoors. The Member stated that these young people had been indoors for 18 months and families were keen to see the outdoor activities resume.

The Corporate Director confirmed that work was ongoing with other sectors where support could be offered within the community. The Head of Adult Services agreed to take the matter up with the respective Members direct.

A Member referred to the complaints and compliments section of the report and felt that there should be a number of compliments received which recognised the good work undertaken by Social Services to support families during the pandemic.

The Corporate Director Social Services advised that due to closures of facilities the Department was unable to gather compliments as the majority of correspondence was sent direct to buildings. The complaints are collated via one system and it was hoped that compliments could be received in the same way as the complaints to make them all more accessible.

A Member raised concerns in relation to vulnerable clients that would have had access to day centres and felt it was important that this service was reintroduced to support families. It was paramount that families had this support and as an Authority these services should now be fully operational. The Member acknowledged that the service was to be reviewed, however he could not support a reduction in the service and felt it was important that the Authority reverted back to the level of services provided prior to the pandemic.

The Corporate Director Social Services reiterated that due to social distancing restrictions these facilities could not be opened to same numbers as pre-pandemic. It was added that consultation would assist in identifying the needs of the service users and their families and this would be used to model out services going forward.

The Committee AGREED that the report be accepted and considered the detail contained in the Annual Report of the Director of Social Services 2020/2021 and contributed 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.

**No. 6**

**CHILDREN AND COMMUNITIES GRANT**

Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Children's Services.

The Service Manager, Children's Services provided a detailed overview of the progress of the Children and Communities Grant and outlined the key points as detailed in the report.

In response to a question raised in relation to grant funding, it was advised that grant funding allocations were confirmed as part of the Welsh Government budget settlements received by the Local Authority. This information was provided in December and specific grants were separate to the budget settlement.

Another Member asked if information could be presented on specific funding projects. The Service Manager advised that this information was available along with performance indicators and agreed to provide this information.

The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing that the report be accepted and the progress made to date on the Children and Communities grant be noted. The CCG Steering Group continued 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.

No. 7

**PROPOSAL TO DEVELOP A BLAENAU GWENT  
MY SUPPORT TEAM (MYST)**

Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Children's Services.

The Service Manager Children's Services spoke to the report which outlined the proposal and business case to develop a Blaenau Gwent My Support Team (MyST) instead of the current joint MyST with Monmouthshire. The Service Manager referred to the background of the establishment of the joint MyST and noted the evidence in the report on the work which had been achieved in 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

The Service Manager referred to the actual savings and cost avoidance the MyST had achieved during 2019/2020 and 2020/2021 and noted the anticipated costs for a Blaenau Gwent team based on a forecast provided by Monmouthshire. The Service Manager further spoke to the report and advised that the establishment of a Blaenau Gwent MyST would continue the positive work achieved and increase capacity within Blaenau Gwent to address the backlog of referrals.

The Committee welcomed the report and Members felt that the savings made as well as the impact on the number of children looked after were positive. The Committee fully supported the report and thanked the officer for an informative overview.

The Committee AGREED that the report be accepted and the positive work MyST have undertaken be acknowledged and support the development of a Blaenau Gwent MyST to the Executive Committee (option 1).

No. 8

**FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME:**  
**18<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER, 2021**

Consideration was given to the report.

The Head of Adult Services advised that the Future Model of Assistive Technology/Telecare Provision report may not be presented to the next meeting as the responsible officer was dealing with the continued response to the pandemic. Therefore, the Chair agreed that the report be presented to a future meeting.

The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted (option 1) and

- a) any amendments to the topics scheduled for the meetings;
- b) suggest any additional invitees that the committee requires to fully consider the reports; and
- c) request any additional information to be included with regards to the topics to be discussed.