

Committee: **Social Services Scrutiny Committee**

Date of meeting: **13th February 2020**

Report Subject: **Update on Progress of the My Support Team**

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)
23.1.20	28.1.20	03.02.20			13.2.20	Info item 11.03.20		

1. Purpose of the Report

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the work of the My Support Team since it became operational in May 2019.

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 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.
- 2.2 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.
- 2.3 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 Partnership Board agreed Blaenau Gwent and Monmouthshire should be the next authorities to develop this service. It was already well evidenced by Torfaen and Caerphilly how MyST had improved outcomes for children looked after with complex needs and how it had made savings and cost avoidance for the local authorities.

3. Options for Recommendation

3.1 Option 1

For scrutiny members to acknowledge the positive work MyST have undertaken in demonstrating good outcomes for our children looked after and the positive impact the work of the team has had on the Children's Services budget.

Option 2

For scrutiny members to acknowledge the positive work MyST have undertaken in demonstrating good outcomes for our children looked after and the positive impact the work of the team has had on the Children's Services budget and advise of any points for clarification

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

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 2017- 2020.

5. Implications Against Each Option

6. *Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)*

6.1 Since being established the MyST successfully moved 3 children from residential care into foster care

6.2 The costs relating to both children are as follows:

Figure 1

	weekly residential costs	Current foster care costs
Child 1	£5250	£450
Child 2	£4400	£450
Child 3	£5000	£0

6.3 Figure 1 demonstrates the savings made due to the change of placement for the 3 children who have moved from residential care to foster care and back to family.

6.4 This has had a positive impact on the Children's Services budget which was showing an under spend of £154,813 at the end of Quarter 2 for 19/20. A note of

caution must be made as this situation could change if other children are admitted to residential care during the remainder of the financial year.

7. *Risk including Mitigating Actions*

7.1 Risk 1

Increase in the numbers of children being placed in high cost residential placements which doesn't always achieve good outcomes for the children

7.2 Mitigation

- The continued work of MyST to reduce the numbers of children currently in residential care and continue to prevent children entering residential care will help to mitigate against this risk.

8.0 *Legal*

8.1 N/A

9. *Human Resources*

9.1 As Monmouthshire are hosting the MyST, there will be no implications for Blaenau Gwent Organisational Development department.

10. *Supporting Evidence*

10.1 *Performance Information and Data*

10.2 As previously mentioned the MyST become operational from May 2019. In May Blaenau Gwent had 18 children in residential care. In December 2019 we have 15 children in residential care and 1 in secure accommodation. The plan is for the child in secure accommodation to move into residential care early February 2020. MyST have been supporting this transition.

10.3 The following information outlines three key areas of work undertaken by MyST from May – December 2019.

1. Numbers of Blaenau Gwent children the team have supported to move out of residential care.
2. The numbers of Blaenau Gwent children the team have supported to prevent children going into residential care
3. The number of Blaenau Gwent practice consultations undertaken

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

Since May 2019 MyST has successfully worked with 3 children to move them out of residential care into foster placements or home. At the heart of this work is the relationship the MyST workers build with the children and their support networks. The small numbers that 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 enabled 2 children to move successfully in a planned way into foster care and 1 child to be rehabilitated back to their parent's care.

The MyST are also working with 1 other child who is currently in residential care who has a plan to move back into the care of an extended family member. This plan will take some time to realise but good progress is being made.

In addition, we have identified 2 other children in residential care who, once the right foster placement has been identified MyST can start to work with them to support their move out of residential care.

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

Since May 2019 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.

10.6 **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. To date MyST have provided 10 practice consultations to staff and foster carers. The feedback has been very positive

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

- 10.7 • **BG Young Person** – “I like having someone there, just for me, and I like being a part of MyST. It has been helpful (and very difficult) to talk about my feelings. I'd prefer to see my worker out of school so that we have more time together”
- 10.8 • **BG foster carer** “working alongside MyST and being in weekly 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
- 10.9 • **BG parent** - “thank you for last night, I truly appreciate it, having someone to speak to really helps” following evening on call support

- 10.10 • **BG Social Worker** “To have them on board to be able to offer such flexibility with supporting the placement is really such a valuable resource. We have been able to get over some real tricky obstacles which without MyST being involved I am almost certain may have ended with further disruption to the placement. I was particularly struck by how D and E embraced this as an opportunity to really see and understand the dynamics between the boys and the way that they deal with stressful situations; whereas others may have become overwhelmed by the chaos”

11. ***Expected outcome for the public***

11.1 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

11.2 ***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

11.3 ***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 and communities which will no doubt benefit them into the future.

11.4 ***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.

11.5 ***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.

11.6 ***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. MyST have also presented a workshop to members in December 2019.

12. **Monitoring Arrangements**

12.1 The following will monitor the MyST arrangements:

- The Children and Families Partnership Board
- The Regional Partnership Board
- The Regional MyST Steering Group
- 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