

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

**CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION
CABINET BOARD**

DATE: 3rd NOVEMBER 2016

**REPORT OF THE HEAD OF CHILDREN AND
YOUNG PEOPLE SERVICES
- A. JARRETT**

MATTER FOR INFORMATION

WARDS AFFECTED: ALL

The progress of the Team Around the Family Service

1. Purpose of Report

To provide committee with an update following Team Around the Family's move into Children and Young Peoples Services (CYPS).

2. Executive Summary

The Team Around the Family transferred in CYPS in July 2015. Since that time the team have gone from strength to strength working alongside social workers to ensure that the step up and step down of cases is handled swiftly.

Whilst initially there were some concerns from staff these have been successfully addressed and caseloads are now manageable, staff morale is good and they are also linking relations with social worker staff.

3. Background

The Team Around the Family service move into Neath Civic Centre and under the umbrella of Children and Young Peoples Service has served for a much closer more effective working relationship between TAF and the Childrens Services front line community teams.

The TAF team have now settled well into their new surroundings and although it is recognised that space is limited each team member has a desk of their own, a computer and mobile phone with email access. The newly appointed Team Manager sits within the team allowing easy access for support and case consultations. The TAF team share a room with CYPS 'front door', namely the Intake and Single Point of Contact teams which encourages greater communication and closer collaboration between services.

The TAF 'I.T' system has been developed to mirror the existing system within children and young people services. Children and families can be quickly identified to determine which service is supporting them at any point in time. Thus avoiding any duplication of work and responding quickly when a service is required.

Performance management systems have been developed with reporting arrangements in line with children and young people services.

The TAF team also benefit from dedicated business support to ensure systems are kept updated and that telephone calls and email enquiries are responded to in a timely fashion.

'Step Up / Step Down' Arrangements

A Principal Officer chairs a weekly meeting which considers cases identified that are currently being held by the TAF service where concerns have escalated reaching threshold for consideration of statutory intervention (a step up into CYPS) and also cases held by CYPS where following an assessment of need and a period of social work intervention risks have reduced to allow consideration for Team Around the Family support (step down).

Each case is considered in detail with Team Managers having the opportunity to properly consider thresholds. The Principal Officers encourages discussion and debate, which has helped build confidence within the management team and a healthy respect for each other's roles and responsibilities.

Agreement is reached on the majority of cases. The Principal Officer will however make the decision on cases where managers have failed to reach agreement on threshold. It must be noted that

in cases where there maybe dispute a decision is more likely to be made for the case to be stepped up into CYPS for an assessment and period of social work intervention to avoid cases 'bouncing back and forth' between two services.

At the time of preparing this report there are currently 170 cases open to the TAF service. For the first six months of this year (April 2016 – September 2016) 18 cases were stepped up and 68 cases were stepped down. During the same period 96 cases were closed by the TAF service, with the majority of cases closing following a successful outcome in relation to the TAF action.

Peer Review

The TAF Team Manager attends a monthly multi agency forum which considers the effectiveness of working relationships between TAF, CYPS and partner agencies. The group scrutinizes each other's work and provides constructive criticism (as well as some compliments!) to ensure standards are being met and maintained. TAF continue to receive positive feedback regarding the quality and timeliness of work. This is also reported via questionnaires provided to families at the end of TAFs involvement with the majority of families finding the TAF service helpful. A number of families have taken time to write positive statements about TAF workers who have supported them through difficult times.

During a members visit to the TAF team over the summer period concerns were expressed by some team members regarding thresholds of cases being held within the team and workload being too high.

Consequently each team member was offered an opportunity to discuss any concerns with the Principal Officer. All of the team members took up the opportunity over a two day period. It was evident that the majority of staff believed that their case load was at an acceptable level and that cases held within the TAF service met the TAF criteria.

Following a review of caseloads, there were no cases identified with immediate safe guarding issues and 3 cases were stepped up into CYPS for a more in depth assessment of need.

It was evident during the interviews that some staff had struggled with moving into Neath Civic and hadn't settled into their new surroundings. At this time some staff were 'hot desking' which caused further upset. It was also evident that some cases were being 'overworked' and had been open to the team for a couple of years. Staff seemed reluctant to close cases where families had become quite attached although the need was no longer present.

It was also at a time when the Agency Team Manager was about to leave the service for a permanent replacement. Although this move was clearly in the best interests of the TAF service it was another change and the TAF team had felt very well supported by the Agency Team Manager and struggled with his departure.

I am pleased to report that the appointment of a new permanent Team Manager has proved to be successful. The Principal Officer and Head of Service have met with the team on at least two occasions each since the summer and the team are feeling a lot more confident and happy in their work. The Team Manager has had supervision with each staff member and workloads are continuing to reduce. 'Thresholds' are considered during each supervision and cases escalated when appropriate. The team are starting to get used to a much more 'hands on' approach with senior managers and are encouraged to raise any issues with management in the first instance, with an open door policy which TAF staff are encouraged to use.

Team Development Day

The team are currently organising a team away day. This will be a further opportunity for them to bond as a team and spend time with the new Team Manager and Principal Officer. The team will be encouraged to consider ideas for shaping the TAF service going forward. Ideas so far include ways to strengthen relationships with partner agencies and 'satellite' working arrangements to cut down on transport costs and time driving across such a large geographical area.

4. **Financial Impact**

After consideration this is not applicable.

5. **Equality Impact Assessment**

After consideration this is not applicable.

6. **Workforce Impacts**

After consideration this is not applicable.

7. **Legal Impacts**

After consideration this is not applicable.

8. **Risk Management**

After consideration this is not applicable.

9. **Consultation**

After consideration this is not applicable.

10. **Recommendation**

After consideration this is not applicable.

11. **Reason for Proposed Decision**

After consideration this is not applicable.

12. **Implementation of Decision**

After consideration this is not applicable.

13. **Appendices**

None

14. **List of Background Papers**

None

15. **Officer Contact**

Keri Warren,
Principal Officer, Assessment & Care Planning