

Social Services, Housing and Community Safety Scrutiny Committee
(Microsoft Teams / Hybrid Council Chamber)

Members Present:

8 June 2023

Chairperson: Councillor C.Galsworthy

Councillors: O.S.Davies, J.Jones, A.R.Lockyer, A.Lodwig,
P.D.Richards, M.Spooner, D.Thomas,
A.R.Aubrey and H.Davies

Councillor Apologies: H.C.Clarke and S.Rahaman

Officers In Attendance: J.Hodges, C.Howard, A.Jarrett, S.Waite,
C.Frey-Davies, N.Jones, T.Rees, M.Selby,
H.Short, V.Smith and P.Chivers

Cabinet Invitees: A.Llewelyn, J.Hale and S.Harris

1. **Chair's Announcements**

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting.

The Chair confirmed that the committee would be scrutinising items 7, 8 and 9 from the Cabinet Board agenda and 9A & 10A from the supplementary Cabinet Board agenda.

With reference to the supplementary Cabinet Board Agenda, the Chair advised that there was an error on the heading; the Neath Port Talbot Justice and Early Intervention draft Youth Justice Plan 2023 should read the Youth Justice and Early Intervention Grading Analysis of the Youth Justice Plan, the Youth Justice Plan was also circulated for ease of reference.

The Chair confirmed that there would be an urgent item on Unpaid Carers for consideration.

2. **Declarations of Interest**

There were none.

3. **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 20th April 2023 were approved as an accurate record of proceedings.

4. **Pre-Decision Scrutiny**

Tai Tarian Update

The Chief Executive of Tai Tarian gave members an overview of the work carried out in 2022-2023 as detailed in the circulated report. Tai Tarian work closely with the authority to determine housing requirements and greatest need.

Members were advised that Tai Tarian have been marked positively in all 45 of the available elements of the Considerate Constructor Gold Award; this is the first time this award has been achieved in Neath Port Talbot.

Members queried the relationship between Councillors and Tai Tarian. There are no Councillors that are currently Board members but there is a close relationship with members. When working locally, members are invited to site visits.

Members noted that the authority are developing a new Housing Strategy and queried how did Tai Tarian see the strategic relationship developing between the association and the local authority currently and in the future? The Chief Executive of Tai Tarian responded that there has always been a strong relationship and the ability to develop within the borough has grown. The relationship has developed to be a really strong one. Tai Tarian also work closely with other housing associations and it is hoped that there is an open relationship with the local authority, where requests would be responded to promptly.

Members thanked Tai Tarian for their support and noted the benefits to local tradespeople seeking employment.

The report was noted.

Childrens Services Risk Management Mini Health Check

The Head of Children's Services outlined the content of the report which is presented for consideration.

Members asked what are the challenges and weaknesses and where and what actions are in place to rectify any weaknesses. Is monitoring in place and what exactly is the cabinet member role and has any training been given. What is working well and how? Officers confirmed that they were delighted with the outcome of the inspection but acknowledged there was always room for improvement. The findings are evidence based. The Cabinet Member for Childrens Services is kept up to date on all matters. Seminars on Safeguarding and Deprivation of Liberties were recently delivered to members. There are many challenges but the service is striving for continuous improvement. The key challenge is the authorities' response to harm outside the family home and officers acknowledged that there is still a lot of work to be done across the partnership.

Members commented that the report highlighted that staff retention is considered good but this has not always been the case and queried what has changed?

Officers confirmed that the authority remains under pressure due to a national shortage of qualified social workers but has moved to a position where during Covid there was a slight increase in staffing levels. Officers noted that the support of the council to offer a market supplement has made a difference to staff recruitment.

Members noted that there were only two part time workers and this was pleasing as agency workers have been a problem in the past. It was noted that situations can change quickly within Social Services and the service are adapting to this. Members gave their congratulations for an incredible report and reported the service is one to be proud of.

Members queried the statement in the report 'Regulators have commented on the services positive work & attitude to responding to actions from inspections and continually striving to seek out & implement developmental improvement' and asked how well are the processes working and how do you know they are working so well?

Officers responded that although every opportunity is taken to celebrate success, there is still room for improvement. The service is aspirational, outward facing and continually developing and this has been recognised in all inspections. The service carries out health checks and the work on the Quality Assurance Framework is transparent. Partners and service recipients are contacted for performance feedback. A Parent Advocacy Network is being developed across the region, bringing parents together who will support other parents.

Members queried the context of the term 'drift' used in the report. Officers confirmed that this was in relation to open cases within Children Services that are moving through the system without any work being carried out. To reduce this occurring, a number of drift indicators are in place; how frequently child have been visited, case activity, plans, assessments and visits, this ensures that open cases are in the right place allowing the service to work with families through any need or risk identified. The aim is to eliminate cases just under the radar and not being worked as expected; partners in health, education and police are brought in as critical friends.

Members asked when the risk register was last reviewed and how regularly? Officers confirmed that the risk register has only recently been updated and since meeting with Risk Management partners to undertake this exercise a number of other risks have been introduced to the register. The register is reviewed fortnightly through the Quality Practice Strategic Group and action plans are in place to address the identified risks. The strategic risk register has been in place for some time but has recently been revised as the corporate centre had revised the guidance on the strategic risk register.

The report was noted.

Information Sharing in Respect of The National Review of Care Planning for Children and Young People Subject to the Public Law Outline Pre- Proceedings

The Head of Children's Services outlined the content of the report which is presented for consideration. The inspection report in letter form is the outcome of an inspection in terms of the Public Law Outline (PLO).

Officers outlined the reorganisation that was carried out 10 years ago when it was recognised that the infrastructure in place for children

and young people was not meeting needs. A front-loaded system was implemented to ensure that the most up to date system, information and support services were in place in order to support children and young people.

Officers explained that PLO is used where assessments have been completed by Childrens Services, support has been given to families and the risks have not reduced sufficiently. The authority therefore meets a threshold to meet with Lawyers to discuss cases in an organised way to avoid Court proceedings. Over recent years the authority has drastically reduced the number of cases entering pre-proceeding arrangements and court proceedings. This decrease is attributed to organisation and culture.

Principal Officers from Childrens Services outlined the rigour in the authorities system, the decision to enter public law is the decision of the Social Worker but the Principal Lawyer provides legal advice.

Officers gave an outline of the proceedings where cases are taken to PLO and how families are informed. Expert assessments are taken into account during the 16 week PLO process and to avoid drift, mid-way reviews are carried out. Currently there are eleven families subject to PLO and nine families in care proceedings.

Officers gave an overview on Audits/Interviews, the service has an embedded quality assurance programme which provides a health check and ensures practice is maintained at a high standard. Officers are given advance notice of inspections and the scope/type of cases being inspected.

Officers confirmed that the presentation from this particular inspection received good feedback from inspectors.

Officers advised members that when the authority was informed of the PLO inspection, much work had already taken place internally and therefore Neath Port Talbot was the pilot agency in Wales. At the same time of the inspection, National PLO guidance was introduced and the new guidance was implemented into all PLO processes.

Following publication of the report letter, the authority are leading the way nationally and officers have been contacted by other local authorities enquiring about our processes. Officers lead a sub group with the local Family Justice Board so that officers can consistently practice in a PLO way across Wales. Officers advised members that

the inspection recommendations were easily implemented. A PLO leaflet has already been developed and is out for consultation with parents. A celebratory letter when families have completed PLO has already been implemented. The final recommendation to use plain language when working with young people and families and this is something that officers are already working on.

Members had no questions but commented it was a good detailed report and a good briefing.

The report was noted.

Neath Port Talbot Youth Justice and Early Intervention Draft Youth Justice Plan 2022-2023 (Renamed in the meeting as Youth Justice and Early Intervention Service Grading Analysis of the Youth Justice Plan 2022-2023)

This item had previously been published under the access to meeting paragraph but officers have agreed to discuss the item publicly.

Officers gave an overview of the report; the analysis and grading of the Youth Justice Plan; ratified in September 2022. The plan, which is acknowledged to be complex and detailed was graded as good by the Youth Justice Board.

Members agreed to look at the grading's when they are brought back to Scrutiny Committee as it was difficult to scrutinise in the current format.

Officers confirmed more detail will be incorporated into this year's plan which will be available shortly. Members congratulated officers on the grading's achieved.

Members requested a visit to Base 15. Officers confirmed that an invitation will be forthcoming and there will also be an opportunity to visit the Turnaround project which is being launched shortly.

The Chair questioned what systems are in place to support young people with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) & Neuro Diverse Development (NDD), the officer advised, young people entering the service will receive an assessment to consider any additional learning needs and interventions are planned accordingly. There are a range of interventions available to support young people, starting with speech and language assessments and specialised provision for

young people with Autism or Asperger's. Young people can receive targeted intervention through referral to Outside. The team includes an education worker with access to the full education database therefore any additional learning needs are known prior to the young person entering the service. There are a range of services to engage young people to develop their social skills, hairdressing, bike maintenance, music projects.

Officers have signed up to ASDAN which supports young people to complete lower level qualifications' in addition to any qualifications they are completing in school. Officers are working closely with education partners to identify young people at an earlier point to carry out preventative interventions to prevent young people entering the criminal justice system and as an alternative to exclusions. Young people who are identified as having an additional learning need are supported at every point of the process whether that's at court, police station, ensuring the presence of an appropriate adult, ensuring police are aware of any needs.

Members questioned behavioural issues associated with ADHD i.e. young people displaying traits without a diagnosis. The waiting list is 3-6 weeks for CAHMS and 28 months for the Neuro Diverse Development Service. Members queried if a referral from the Youth Justice Team is given an earlier appointment? The Officer confirmed that the Youth Justice Service had no preferential treatment for waiting times. Young people with traits are identified through the speech and language therapist who will liaise with the school to initiate the appropriate pathway, often progressing the pathway themselves if the school does not feel it is appropriate.

Members asked what are the next steps when all resources have been exhausted and the young person is still prolifically offending. The Officer confirmed that there is access to an advanced case management model consisting of a forensic psychologist linked to specialist team in CAHMS, who will produce a formulation of the young person's life from pre-birth to the current day, working with multiple partners on different strategies, this is subject to three monthly reviews.

Members questioned whether data and analysis was available on the background of families in relation to alcohol and drugs. Following the last inspection each area of the service; prevention, bureau and court arena was analysed to understand the background of the young people to try to understand their circumstances, which could make

them more vulnerable to entering the service. The information is reported to management board on a quarterly & annual basis. Previously the data was quantitative but it is now also qualitative, the child is seen first and a young offender second.

Members noted that the report contained a quote from a young person saying it had helped to have someone to talk to and they had listened to the advice given, members questioned whether the young person had re-offended. No details could be given but officers can find out further details if needed.

The report stated that 'Young people don't want to be talked at or about, they want to be seen heard, believed and respected'. Members questioned if support workers also embed that respect has to be earned; it's a two way relationship. Officers confirmed that it is a trauma informed service and staff have full training in working with young people. Officers noted that young people can be very traumatised and frightened when they first enter the service.

Members questioned the numbers of looked after children and asked what extra support was in place to prevent looked after children being criminalised after leaving care. Officers confirmed that data on the amount of looked after children offending will be included in the next plan, it is part of the quarterly data and will feed into the annual information. It was acknowledged that looked after children are at a higher risk of entering the youth justice system and there is a national drive to reduce criminalisation of looked after children.

Members commented that there is a Welsh Government All Wales Protocol to reduce criminalisation, members are often unaware of such information. Members requested that officers could circulate any information to members when available.

The report was noted.

5. **Forward Work Programme 2023/2024**

Members will receive an invitation to a forward work programme session shortly.

Members of the Committee agreed that the following item be included on the Forward Work Programme:

Special Impact Bonds Task and Finish Group

The Chair proposed a Task and Finish Group to discuss Special Impact Bonds. The Democratic Services Officer gave advice that a separate meeting should be arranged to consider and agree to the Task & Finish group and agree the scope and terms of reference, relevant officers can be invited to provide advice.

It was agreed that Democratic Services will arrange a meeting for members to attend a meeting to consider and agree to the task and finish group, along with the scope of the task and finish group and terms of reference. Also to invite the relevant officers so they can provide advice on the topics.

6. Urgent Items

Unpaid Carers

Officers outlined the content of the report which is presented for information. Members questioned why Carers needs are not being met, why they don't have information on time and are not aware of assessment? Officers acknowledged the current processes in place are not as robust as they need to be, a lot of the work is taking place but the data is not being captured.

The Director responded that members should be under no illusions, the authority is in a pressured position in terms of the services we deliver to carers and expressed his opinion that we are yet to recover from the issues experienced during the pandemic. There is significant work to do in this area but congratulations were extended to the officer for the work currently being undertaken. It was suggested a report should come back to Scrutiny in six months' time.

Given the expected growth over the next seven years, members asked what mitigating measures are being put in place, there is currently a three week wait for triage and this will increase. The Officer responded in terms of the project being undertaken by the Carer Development Officer, part of their role will be to undertake triage and work with the carers' service to reduce and monitor the waiting list. As this is a trial post, work will be monitored and feedback will be gathered from carers.

The report was noted.

7. **Access to meetings**

This was not required.

8. **Pre-Decision Scrutiny of Private Item/s**

There were no private items.

CHAIRPERSON