



CYNGOR BWRDEISTREF SIROL
RHONDDA CYNON TAF
COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

COMMITTEE SUMMONS

C.Hanagan
Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council
The Pavilions
Cambrian Park
Clydach Vale CF40 2XX

Meeting Contact: Claire Hendy - Senior Democratic Services Officer (01443 424081)

YOU ARE SUMMONED to a meeting of **CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** to be held at the **Virtual Meeting** on **WEDNESDAY, 3RD FEBRUARY, 2021** at **5.00 PM**.

Non Committee Members and Members of the public may request the facility to address the Committee at their meetings on the business listed although facilitation of this request is at the discretion of the Chair. It is kindly asked that such notification is made to Democratic Services by Monday, 1 February 2021 on the contact details listed above, including stipulating whether the address will be in Welsh or English.

AGENDA

**Page
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1. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

To receive disclosures of personal interest from Members in accordance with the Code of Conduct

Note:

1. Members are requested to identify the item number and subject matter that their interest relates to and signify the nature of the personal interest: and
2. Where Members withdraw from a meeting as a consequence of the disclosure of a prejudicial interest they must notify the Chairman when they leave.

2. MINUTES

To receive the minutes of the previous meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee held on 2nd December 2020

5 - 12

REPORTS OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR DEMOCRATIC SERVICES & COMMUNICATIONS

3. CONSULTATION LINKS

Information is provided in respect of relevant [consultations](#) for consideration by the Committee.

REPORT OF THE GROUP DIRECTOR, COMMUNITY & CHILDREN'S SERVICES

4. YOUNG CARERS REPORT

To consider the work carried out by the Young Carer Service.

13 - 24

5. YOUTH OFFENDING SERVICE REPORT

To consider the report of the Youth Offending Service.

25 - 30

6. CHAIR'S REVIEW AND CLOSE

To reflect on the meeting and actions to be taken forward.

7. URGENT BUSINESS

To consider any items, which the Chairman, by reason of special circumstances, is of the opinion should be considered at the meeting as a matter of urgency

Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication

Circulation:-

The Chair and Vice-Chair of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee (County Borough Councillor S. Rees-Owen and County Borough Councillor J Edwards respectively)

County Borough Councillors:

Councillor S Evans, Councillor J Brencher, Councillor H Fychan, Councillor A Calvert, Councillor S Powell, Councillor M Powell, Councillor M Griffiths, Councillor D Owen-Jones, Councillor S Morgans, Councillor G Stacey, Councillor L De Vet and Councillor L Walker

Co-Opted Members:-

Mr M Cleverley

Mr J Fish, Voting Elected Parent / Governor Representative

Ms A Jones, Representing UNITE

Mr C Jones, Representing GMB

Mrs C Jones, Representing the National Union of Teachers and Teachers' Panel

Mr D Price, Representing UNISON

Mr A Rickett, Voting Diocesan Authorities' Representative

Mrs R Nicholls, Voting Elected Parent / Governor Representative

Mr L Patterson, Voting Elected Parent / Governor Representative

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RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Minutes of the virtual meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee meeting held
on Wednesday, 2 December 2020 at 5.00 pm.

County Borough Councillors - Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee Members in attendance:-

Councillor S. Rees-Owen (Chair)

Councillor J Edwards Councillor S Evans
Councillor J Brencher Councillor A Calvert
Councillor M Griffiths Councillor D Owen-Jones
Councillor L Walker

Co-Opted Members in attendance:-

Mr J Fish, Voting Elected Parent / Governor Representative
Mrs R. Nicholls, Voting Elected Parent / Governor Representative

Officers in attendance:-

Mr P Nicholls, Service Director, Legal Services
Ms G Davies, Director of Education and Inclusion Services
Mrs. J Allen, Children and Young People's Service Manager
Ms C Jones, Head of Access & Inclusion
Ms Z Lancelott, Head of Community Wellbeing & Resilience
Ms A Lloyd, Service Director, Children's Services
Ms K Webster, Deputy Principal Educational Psychologist

County Borough Councillors in attendance:-

Cllr W Lewis – Vice Chair Overview & Scrutiny

31 Announcements and Apologies

The Chair Welcomed Members and Officers to the Joint Meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee. A special welcome was made to Mr L Patterson the newly elected Co-opted Voting Parent Governor representative as a Member of the Committee.

Apologies of absence were received from County Borough Councillors S. Morgans, S Powell, G Stacey and H Fychan

32 Declaration of Interest

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, there were no declarations made pertaining to the agenda.

33 Minutes

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the 4th November 2020 as an accurate reflection of the meeting.

34 Consultation Links

The Chair referenced the consultation links, which were available through the 'RCT Scrutiny' website. The Chair reminded Members that Information is provided in respect of relevant consultations for consideration by the Committee, which are circulated on a monthly basis by the Scrutiny Research Officer

35 Integrated Wellbeing Support for Children and Young People in RCT

The Chair explained that there were a number of officers present and suggested that the presentation would be taken in sections and after each section Members of the committee would be asked to put forward their question before moving on to the next service area.

The Chair invited to the Director of Education & Inclusion Services and the Director of Children's Services to present the report and the supporting presentation.

In response to Scrutiny Committees request for information relating to the wellbeing and emotional support for children and young people during Covid -19 Members were presented with a high-level presentation that illustrates the breath of support available across both directorates.

The Directors explained that Officer from a range service areas were present to present an overview of the extensive work carried out by their individual areas and officers would be available to take question from Members at any given point.

Officers recapped on the information the Committee had been previously received regarding Covid- 19 stating that a total of 25 childcare hubs were swiftly established throughout the County Borough to ensure that the needs of the most vulnerable and the children of critical workers were met during the school closure period. It was also explained that pre-school children also accessed free childcare as part of the Coronavirus Childcare Assistance Scheme.

The Director of Education continued to explain that since children returned to school in September significant numbers of families across RCT continue to face ongoing hardship such as financial difficulties, health issues and multiple adverse experiences. It was highlighted that to meet the service demands integrated service models, processes and procedures have been developed.

Members were provided with a presentation under the following headings which gave an overview of what support was provided by each service area:

- Integrated wellbeing support Service – Returning to School;
- Resilient Families Service;
- AWS – Service Changes;
- Access & Inclusion Service Wellbeing Support;
- Children Looked After Service

In relation to the Integrated Wellbeing Support Service Members were informed by the Children & Young People Service Manager of the processes that were in place when schools identify pupils not attending due to anxieties around Covid , and how they interface with work carried out by the Attendance and Wellbeing Service and the YEPS Service The objective of the pathways is to ensure that pupil's needs are addressed to assist them to return and remain in school and it highlighted the support given to pupils to help them overcome their anxieties and fears in re-engaging to the educational environment.

A Member praised the work of the service and asked whether there were any pupils who hadn't returned to school despite this support and intervention. A request was made for data on these numbers for the Committee.

It was explained that all processes are put in place to encourage and support pupils to go back to school. However, despite the best efforts of the service there are a number of pupils who haven't returned to school or education for many reasons. The Head of the Attendance and Wellbeing Service informed of the processes and procedures implemented and explained that there are currently 280 pupils across RCT who haven't returned to school. These learners have a range of issues and some have medical issues which can also present as a barrier to return to school.

The Chair asked Officers if the Committee could have a breakdown of age group, areas and reason why this was the case. Officer explained that they would collate the information and report back.

A Member commented that schools were conscious of many pupils within their care they are concerned about but that there will be others that they wouldn't know about. Therefore, the Member asked if YEPS have been offering school based drop in sessions for anxious pupils. In addition the Member asked what measures were in place for children with medical issues and could blended learning be offered for these children that need to remain at home during the pandemic.

It was also asked what procedures are in place for children who may be known to Children's Services and haven't been seen or made contact with. They asked if there was any way during the current situation that officers can visit and have contact with child face to face.

In response, Officers explained that in respect of drop in session this was something we were keen to reinstate and since September YEPS have worked with schools to arrange drop in sessions during lunch times and immediately after school. The Officer explained that it was not the same level as pre- Covid due to the restrictions that were in place but with tight risk assessments these were allowed to happen. The Officer continued to explained that since the firebreak schools risk assessments have not supported these drop-n sessions due to mixing of bubbles and instead they have now moved online. These virtual sessions are now being offered with the same worker for continuity we are

hope that come January we will be able to reinstate the sessions going forward.

The Head of Attendance and Wellbeing explained that in cases when a child who has not been seen by the school for a number of days, they can refer to the service and a wellbeing checks will be carried out. In respect of children on the child protection register where there has been no contact with school or social worker with 24 hours a referral for same day visit will take place. If the Wellbeing Officer is unable to sight the child then this will be escalated to 101 for a police welfare visit. The Officer explained there had been 13 cases to date and these steps were taken.

In relation to the other questions the Head of Attendance and Wellbeing Service explained that with regards to medical issues and shielding we do have a small amount of children have been provided with medical certificates and authorised absence from the school agreed to. The number of learners accessing treatment for cancer, organ failure, is thankfully very small. The Chief Medical Officer has indicated that shielding has stopped and therefore children are encouraged to attend school. Parents/ carers are reassured that measurers adopted by schools ensure that schools remain to be a safe place for children to attend and schools play an important role in ensuring that pupil's wellbeing is closely monitored.

In relation to the blended learning support the officer explained that this was down to the head teacher as Welsh Government guidance states that all children should be in school or education.

Members put further questions relating to the current levels of the counselling service and asked whether it was manageable and if there were wrap around services available virtually or otherwise for pupil's wellbeing and worries along with issues of school transport and anxiety factors regarding transport. In response to the wrap around service communication eye to eye support was more virtual than face to face support.

Members were informed that out of the 280 pupil who had not returned to school transport issues was not a contributing factor.

The Head of Community Wellbeing and Resilience continued the presentation by providing Members with an overview of the work carried out by the Resilient Families Service and how the service has adapted through the current Covid 19 pandemic and the impact it has had on many families. The Service still continues to visit families at home however the way in which this is carried out has changed greatly.

The Chair thanked the Officer and asked if there was an increase in referrals from families due to the pandemic. In response the Officer explained that there doesn't seem to be an increase in numbers but the reason for referrals are different and this seems to be due to the impact of the lockdown.

With regards to the impact of the lockdown Members asked for information regarding domestic violence and also suicide rates especially amongst men.

A Member asked if there was an issue regarding availability of Educational Psychologists and were concerned about a shortage as the impact of Covid would only increase as we go forward. It was explained that from the Resilient

Families Service (RSF) perspective the service has now employed and Educational Psychologist to the team and there is also access to the Therapeutic Families Team for those that require therapeutic support through the triage system.

Specialist Health Visitor support is also available through Resilient Families Service although virtually at present and this through funding from Welsh Government.

The Head Attendance and Wellbeing Services provided Members with an overview of the Service changes. The officer recapped on the previous information regarding the Wellbeing Response visits and explained that since September Welsh Government had put a hold on Fixed Penalty Notice and prosecutions and the work of the AWS Service had to adjust to accommodate this factor.

After further questioning the Chair moved on to the next slide in the presentation.

The Head of Inclusion Services informed Members of the Access and Inclusion Service Wellbeing support under the following headings:

- Revised service model delivery ;
- Family Liaison Officers;
- Snap Parent Partnership;
- Access & Inclusion Website;
- EOTAS & Elective Home Education
- Collaborative Counselling initiative;
- Critical Incident Response;
- EPS Support Line;
- Professional Reflection Session;
- PERMA Wellbeing Tools;
- Wellbeing Training Programme and many other areas.

Members found this information very valuable, A Member commented that she enjoyed the Video regarding wellbeing that was shared via Council Website” It’s Ok Not to be Ok”. The Member commented that it showed parents that Officers from the service are accessible. .

The Member continued and commented on the Coffee Mornings that have been offered for parents and was pleased to see the uptake was a positive one and had been better attended in virtual sphere. However The Member noted that holding these vents during the daytime is a barrier for some working parents and asked for this be taken into consideration going forward so that when children go back to school parents will still able to attend and receive this essential support.

In respect if the Coffee Mornings it was explained that there is a Family Engagement Action Plan and that the Family Liaison Officer is considering rolling out coffee mornings at different times, together with other activities to engage parents on a larger scale.

A query was raised in relation to supporting schools with staff absences, particularly those who provide literacy intervention and numeracy intervention for pupils with ALN..

The Senior Educational Psychologist explained that maintaining continuity of

support for our pupils is paramount and that support for staff is offered in two strands: support for the staff member that is absent and support for the staff who have to cover the extra work. It was explained that the Educational Psychology Service is seeing strategies for wellbeing support starting to embed in schools. These strategies need to be embedded in to daily teaching sessions so the pupils are supported in an inclusive way.

Other Members asked questions regarding ALN funding and the use of the PERMA too along with the pupil's voice. It was noted that new exciting ways of promoting pupil voice are being developed collaboratively with YEPS but it was acknowledged that there is still a great deal of work to be done in this area.

With regards to allocating funding to schools, it was noted that PLASC data is used to identify needs of pupils at various levels.

A Member asked if there had been any base line data available with regards to the PERMA tool and how it compared to the data since the pandemic. It was explained that there is no data at present as the tool has embedded since the pandemic and the service will continue to monitor going forward and bring back data in the future.

The Member commented that a report regarding Coronavirus data was sent to Directors of local authorities and asked whether it had been shared with schools. It was explained that the report has been sent out to all our headteachers and will be used to inform support going forward.

With regards to Children Looked after Members were provided with information in respect of the advice and support that had been provided by the service and how the service has developed with the fast changing pace to support parents and carers during this time.

Members once again put forward questions and officers highlighted the way in which parents/ guardians can request help from the Children Looked After Team. The Director of Children's Services also presented Members with an over of the RCT families' website which highlighted the developments to make it easier to follow and finally presented important contact details for Members to direct any constituent concerns to.

After a very in depth discussion Members Resolved to:

- Acknowledge the context of the report;
- Receive a breakdown of the information regarding the non-attendance of 280 pupils.

36 Chair's Review and Close

The Chair thanked the Committee for all their hard work throughout the year and informed the of the next meeting. Before for closing the meeting the Chair wished both Members and Office a Very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

37 Urgent Business

There was no urgent business to consider.

This meeting closed at 7.25 pm

**CLLR S REES-OWEN
CHAIR.**

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RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee

YOUNG CARERS REPORT

AUTHOR: Mari Ropstad, Service Manager – Carers, RCT Council

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update members on the RCT Young Carers Service.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Scrutiny Committee considers the attached report and the work undertaken for young carers in RCT.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Prior to the implementation of the Social Service and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014, Health Boards in Wales had a lead role under The Carers Strategies (Wales) Measure 2010 to prepare, publish and implement with partners a strategy for the benefit of unpaid carers, including young carers.
- 3.2 The Carers Strategies (Wales) Measure 2010 was repealed following introduction of the Social Service and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014. A new national plan for carers was expected for 2020/2021 but COVID 19 and the subsequent lockdown and disruption has led to a delay in progressing the public engagement which is now planned for October 2020 - January 2021.
- 3.3 Once confirmed a Regional Action plan will be required to implement the National priorities and recommendations established in the new national.
- 3.4 A Cwm Taf Morgannwg Carers Partnership Group was established to monitor the implementation of the Statement of Intent and promote the integration of services for carers, as required by Part 9 of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act.
- 3.5 Welsh Government provided transitional funding of £1million per annum for Wales in 2019/20 (£161,000 for Cwm Taf Morgannwg) to protect and build on progress to date and to support the expansion of Carers rights

under the implementation of the SSWB Act. Young carers are included in this regional work.

4. KEY POINTS

- 4.1 This has been a challenging year for young carers as their circumstances have changed significantly. The support provided has continued within Coronavirus restrictions and the RCT Young Carers Service has supported young carers and families to deal with challenges.
- 4.2 A new national ID card for young carers will be launched before the end of March in RCT. This scheme has been piloted with a group of young carers currently accessing support and additional shopping discounts has been added with support from RCT Council's Staff Benefits scheme.
- 4.3 Once restrictions allow, all-age carers services in the borough will be co-located in a newly refurbished office in Gelliwastad Road, Pontypridd. Grant funding has provided equipment and furnishings to allow the space to be used for carer events, workshops, training and meetings and will effectively act as a carers hub for RCT.

5. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no foreseen equality and diversity implications associated with this report.

6. CONSULTATION

- 6.1 This report has been prepared in consultation with Action for Children, who provides a commissioned support service for young carers, and the dedicated young carer assessor within the Information, Assistance and Advice service.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 7.1 There are no financial implications aligned to this report. The Cwm Taf Morgannwg Carers Partnership Group oversees the use of the Welsh Government transitional funding, reporting to the SSWB Transformation Leadership Group and the SSWB Partnership Board.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 8.1 The Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 came into force in April 2016 and is intended to transform the way services are delivered. It repeals the majority of community care legislation including the Carers Strategies (Wales) Measure 2010.

8.2 The new Act provides a definition of a carer as “a person who provides or intends to provide care for an adult or disabled child” and removes the requirement that carers must be providing a “substantial amount of care on a regular basis.” The Act includes new rights for carers and new duties on local authorities.

9. **LINKS TO THE COUNCIL’S CORPORATE PLAN & OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES**

9.1 The work to implement the Statement of Intent for Carers and the Welsh Government national priorities for carers has complemented the Council's priorities to Promote independence and positive lives for everyone including carers of all ages.

Other Information:

Relevant Scrutiny Committee

- Children and young people Scrutiny Committee



LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT OF GROUP DIRECTOR, COMMUNITY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES, IN DISCUSSIONS WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER, COUNCILLOR LEYSHON

RCT YOUNG CARERS REPORT

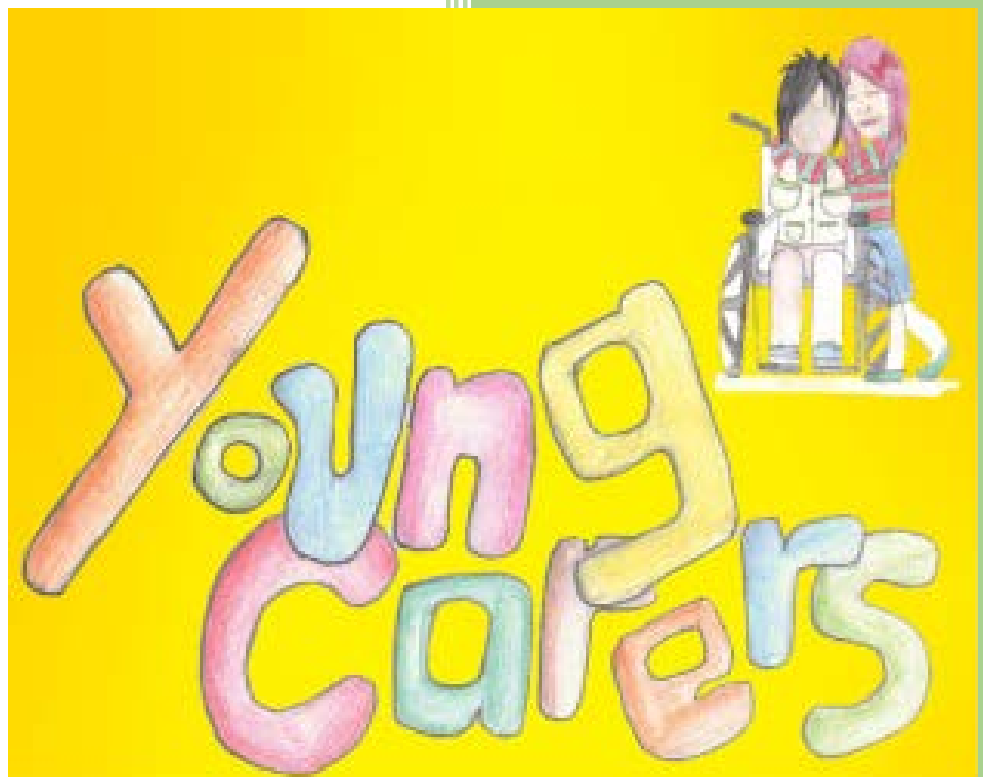
Background Papers:

RCT Young Carers Report

Officer to contact: Tracy Prosser, Head of Service, Children's Services

Annual report

RCT Young Carers



Mari Ropstad
Service Manager - Carers
Annual report

OVERVIEW

This year has been a challenging and different one. With the global pandemic it has been necessary to adapt working practices and finding new ways of supporting young carers. Many young carers have also found their roles have changed significantly with many required to do more. In some instances, this has been coupled with additional anxiety in terms of catching or spreading the virus, as well as additional pressure to keep on top of schoolwork with distance learning. Our support services have tried to adapt by offering more individual sessions throughout the year, providing continued breaks for young carers in smaller groups when restrictions allowed and delivering food parcels and care packages.

This report attempts to summarise the support provided to young carers (aged 0-17) and young adult carers (aged 18-25) during a turbulent year and recognise some of the key developments achieved despite extremely challenging circumstances.

BACKGROUND

The Young Carers Service now sits within the wider all-age Carers Support Project following a review and restructure carried out towards the end of 2018/2019. The review identified a need for a strategic lead for carers within the authority and the Service Manager for Carers now has responsibility for all carer issues, including young carers, young adult carers and adult carers.

The restructure resulted in changes to the support provided to young carers. The service still has a dedicated Young Carer Assessor who now sits within the wider Information, Advice and Assistance function of Children's Services. This is to ensure that statutory obligations are met in terms of assessment and monitoring of young carers.

Staff within the Carers Support Project who were previously working with specific groups of carers (such as parent carers and sibling carers) are now working across all carer services and the project has absorbed the young carer work as part of the all-age carer support.

It was also recognised that greater integration was required with the third-sector commissioned young carers support service (currently provided by Action for Children) so this service will be integrated with the Carers Support Project in Gelliwastad Road once restrictions allow.

The support for young adult carers (aged 18-25) continues to be provided by a dedicated part-time worker, funded via the Families First grant. This funding has not yet been confirmed for 2021/2022.

YOUNG CARER SUPPORT SERVICE

The young carer support service is currently provided by Action for Children. From March 2020, when the first lockdown was announced, the service has been based primarily on virtual support with individual face-to-face support for the most

vulnerable young carers. The below year-on-year statistics illustrate how the service has changed:

	2018	2019	2020
April-June			
Number of referrals	11	10	4
1-to-1 sessions	19	5	62
Group work	24	27	8
July-September			
Number of referrals	15	14	11
1-to-1 sessions	17	6	5
Group work	21	18	20
October-December			
Number of referrals	9	12	8
1-to-1 sessions	12	4	29
Group work	18	18	20

There were several challenges to overcome for the staff and young carers:

- Not everyone had access to a computer or a digital device.
- Not all families had Wi-Fi to join in the virtual sessions or didn't have enough data on phones.
- Some young carers do not like engaging over Teams/Zoom.
- There were travel restrictions to consider when dropping off equipment and some staff had to self-isolate.
- Generally, the caring roles of young carers known to the project increased due to the lockdowns and being at home 24/7. This also impacted on their health and wellbeing.

The virtual groups allowed young carers to have contact with staff and peers and receive support if they needed it. This was combined with socially distanced one-to-one individual support, often face-to-face, for the most vulnerable young carers. Wellbeing visits were also made to families as required, following all restrictions and guidelines.

In between lockdown periods, Action for Children were able to re-start group sessions to provide a break away from home for some young carers. These groups have been smaller than normal groups and transport has been an issue for many as staff were not able to carry passengers in their cars as they would normally.

Every month from March 2020, Action for Children staff have posted out different care packages, including games, equipment, treats and gifts to young carers to help them through a very difficult time.

Many families were struggling financially, and Action for Children applied for more than £2,000 worth of grants their own Action for Children Covid Appeal. Through these grants families were able to purchase essential items such a gas, electric and food.

Many families were also unable to get shopping and staff supported with collections and deliveries, including collection prescriptions from families.

YOUNG CARER ASSESSMENTS

There is a dedicated worker responsible for assessing young carers who is located within the children's services Information, Advice and Assistance (IAA) team. This means we can ensure statutory obligations are met for assessing and supporting young carers with greater ease and accuracy.

Referrals received

<i>Q1 Apr-Jun</i>	10
<i>Q2 Jul-Sep</i>	16
<i>Q3 Oct-Dec</i>	28
<i>Q4 to date</i>	4
TOTAL to date	54

Referrals during the first two quarters were significantly lower than average due to the lockdown beginning, schools being closed and not as much contact with families.

Once schools returned in Q3 the referrals picked up again. More agencies were having contact with families again and this referral rate was above average for a quarter. The lack of awareness-raising in schools is likely to contribute to the reduced referral rate.

Hardly any raising awareness work has been carried out by the young carers project during the pandemic, understandably, and this could also be contributing to the reduced referral rate.

Source of referrals

<i>Children's Services</i>	10
<i>Resilient families</i>	9
<i>Family</i>	9
<i>School</i>	9
<i>Disabled Children's Team</i>	6
<i>Health</i>	3
<i>College</i>	3
<i>YEPS service</i>	3
<i>Adult Services</i>	3
<i>Carers Support Project/Young Carers Project</i>	2
<i>Miskin</i>	1

To date, 80 reviews have been completed during the year, mainly over the telephone due to the need to prioritise visits during lockdown restrictions. Overall, little progress have been made on support plans as the majority of support sessions have taken

place online and this causes issues for many young carers due to IT issues, reliance on parents/carers to set equipment up or little confidence in engaging online.

Work during Covid-19

During initial lockdown period, most of the assessor's work involved carrying out welfare calls to the most vulnerable families, ensuring they had access to food and medical supplies.

Assessments were completed over the phone which was not ideal in terms of forming a relationship with the family, but any immediate needs were identified and support or referrals were provided.

Reviews were completed over the phone which was a way of carrying out welfare checks and identifying any support needed.

This period also involved a lot of work with the schools as many young carers didn't have the IT equipment needed to complete their online education. Many schools classed young carers as being vulnerable and loaned IT equipment out or arranged for work to be sent to their homes. It is likely our prior work on setting up and promoting the Young Carer Schools Award programme has contributed to increased awareness in schools of young carers and the reasons why they are vulnerable.

The emotional and wellbeing support offered to the young carers increased once visits (with appropriate PPE) could be carried out.

Most schools returned in September, but several young carers experienced a lot of anxiety about returning to school. Some were anxious about picking up the virus in school and infecting their vulnerable relatives and some had become even more isolated than they were pre-Covid and couldn't contemplate returning to a busy, noisy environment. A lot of joint working was completed with school staff to arrange flexible and staggered returns. Some young carers continued to work online. Some young carers have not yet returned to school due to the very vulnerable nature/health of their parent and schools continue to provide welfare calls to these families.

SIBLING CARERS

Sibling carers (those helping to care for a sibling with additional needs) continue to receive a limited specific support service via the Carers Support Project. Normally activities would be planned for school holiday periods to allow the sibling carers to spend some quality time with a parent and meet other children in a similar situation. During the pandemic, the support has been provided at a distance with welfare calls and delivery of Boredom Buster packs. During the autumn we were successful in obtaining some grant funding to allow us to plan and run a 10-week wellbeing course called Project S, focused on emotional wellbeing and resilience. This course allowed 11 sibling carers to attend regular Zoom sessions and completing tasks in their workbook in between. All who completed received a prize at the end.

YOUNG ADULT CARERS SERVICE

The Young Adult Carer (YAC) Service has a dedicated part-time worker who is funded via a Families First grant. The worker is responsible for assessing the members of the group, which is currently 84, to provide evidence of how the service helps them develop resilience and mental wellbeing. The aim of the service is to support YACs with personal growth through educational workshops and some social events. It also provides a break from the caring role and a chance to learn new skills.

The service has been delivered exclusively online from March 2020 and young adult carers (YACs) have been provided with information and assistance via their closed Facebook group. A number of events have taken place to help support YACs through this difficult time and provide some light relief from caring, including mindfulness sessions, yoga, baking workshops, anxiety workshops and quiz nights.

The YAC service also supports the Caring and Supporting Each Other (CASE) group, which was set up as a charitable community interest group by the YACs. The CASE group has successfully applied for funding from the regional carers grant to allow them to organise a programme of educational and skills workshops this year, including a wellbeing festival, cooking skills, budgeting workshops, CV writing and how to write grant applications.

CARERS HUB

Following the restructure of the carers services in RCT, the Carers Support Project office in Gelliwastad Road required refurbishment in order to accommodate additional staff from Action for Children and making it suitable as a permanent office space. RCT Council invested in the refurbishment, installing a kitchen and re-designing the room layout to allow Action for Children their own room within the office.

A capital grant was awarded via the Intermediate Care Fund to allow the newly refurbished office to be used as a Carers Hub for carers of all ages in RCT. Items such as soft seating, a projector and screen, tables and chairs, soft furnishings, external signage and window transfers, a TV and kitchenware was funded by the grant to allow workshops, social events, skills sessions and young carer groups to use the space on a regular basis once restrictions allow.

YOUNG CARER ID CARDS

RCT Council are an early adopter for the Welsh Government's national ID card scheme for young carers. Our launch date remains fluid due to Covid, however the card launch is imminent and will happen before the end of March 2021. We have completed a pilot project with young carers accessing our young carer support project and these already have their cards.

We are currently producing a launch video to be used across social media platforms, featuring young carers and their views on what the card means to them. Following the launch we will be able to accept application from all young carers and we will be working with the Carer Champions in schools (secondary schools in the first

instance) to train them as Trusted Referrers for the ID card scheme, thereby allowing easier access and more awareness of the card.

The purpose of the card at present is primarily for identification of young carers in schools, health and other settings as young carers have repeatedly indicated this as a need. We have however successfully attached a benefit via the Council's staff benefit scheme which will entitle all successful applicants to also receive the Vectis card for local discounts on shopping. It is likely more benefits will in time be attached to the card, both nationally and locally.

OTHER DEVELOPMENTS

Chromebooks

We have distributed 20 Chromebooks to young carers, sibling carers and young adult carers in December 2020 and January 2021. These were provided by Welsh Government and included 12-months worth of free mobile WiFi.

Young carer and young adult carer recognition evening

The recognition evening planned in June 2020 to celebrate the achievements and contributions of young carers and young adult carers was cancelled due to Covid. We have repurposed this funding to produce a celebratory film instead, focussing on the challenges young carers have overcome this year. This film is currently in production however the changing restrictions continue to make this process difficult.

Grant schemes

We have been required to repurpose much funding this financial year as our original plans were not able to take place due to Covid. For young carers we have launched a wellbeing grant scheme which young carers can apply to for funding to purchase anything which will improve their emotional wellbeing and mental health.

FUTURE PLANS

Our key aims for the immediate future is to continue to provide young carers with support despite any restrictions. Once the schools reopen fully, we hope to promote the Young Carer Schools Award programme to ensure young carers in all RCT primary and secondary schools are identified and aware of the support available to them.

The launch of the young carer ID card scheme will support this aim of early identification and support and should deliver several benefits to young carers.

We are scoping the possibility of achieving the Carer Friendly Employer accreditation, awarded by the Carers Trust South East Wales, in order to support working carers, some of whom may be young carers and young adult carers. This will require coordinated effort across all areas of the Council in order to adopt a Carers Policy for staff, maintain a staff carers network, ensure carers within the workforce are identified and supported and that all staff receive carer awareness training.

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2021/22

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

3rd February 2021

REPORT OF THE GROUP DIRECTOR, COMMUNITY & CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Agenda Item No:

**CWM TAF YOUTH OFFENDING
SERVICE**

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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the work of the Cwm Taf Youth Offending Service (YOS) for 2020/21. This includes a summarised response to the Covid 19 pandemic, and to inform members of future service challenges/risks.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that members:
- 2.2 Acknowledge the impact of Covid and the response of the YOS during the past 10 months whilst setting out the future challenges for the service.
- 2.3 Receive further reports in due course in order to be satisfied of the progress being made to meet future demands and ensure the needs of our service users are met.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Cwm Taf Youth Offending Service is a statutory partnership legislated by the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and provides services across two local authority areas, namely Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil. The local authority YOS areas merged to form Cwm Taf YOS in August 2014. The aim of the service is to prevent the offending and re-offending of children and young people. The statutory partners are: South Wales Police; Cwm Taf Morganwg Health Board; HM Prison and Probation Service; and the local authority areas of Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil. These partners provide financial and staffing contributions to the Youth Offending Service. The Youth Offending Service also attracts external grant funding from the Youth Justice Board, Welsh Government and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner.

- 3.2 Overall governance is facilitated by the Regional Cwm Taf Offender Management Board (OMB) which meets quarterly to hold the service to account, examine performance, and to monitor the delivery of the service.
- 3.3 In addition to the scrutiny provided via the Offender Management Board, the Youth Offending Service also reports its performance on a quarterly basis to the Youth Justice Board (YJB), and to the Welsh Government in relation to its prevention work. The YOS is also subject to an inspection regime carried out by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP).
- 3.4 As a result of Covid 19, The YOS were not required to provide an annual Youth Justice Plan for the financial year 2020/21. However, the Youth Justice Board instead requested that YOS complete a self assessment and action plan in relation to a new set of National Standards for Youth Justice. This work had begun in September 2019. The National Standards work is linked to the Structure and Governance of the service and will be overseen by the Offender Management Board. The YOS has sought operational and strategic 'buy in' from partner agencies represented on the Board and this work is ongoing. Furthermore, the YOS was also required to submit a YOS 'Transition to Recovery Plan' for 2020/21, (see attached document) the details of which are summarised in this report.

4. UPDATE SINCE MARCH 2020

- 4.1 Alongside partner agencies, the YOS staff have undertaken much of their day to day tasks remotely. This has meant reduced face to face contact with young people and families whilst adjusting to working in a more agile way from home. Initially, this created some difficulties with the normal day to day business and many staff experienced problems, mainly related to technology in order to undertake tasks in an efficient manner.
- 4.2 However, during this time, YOS staff have continued to support young people who appear in the law courts (including a Remand court based in Cardiff), or who required an appropriate adult (AA) at the police station when arrested, or who agreed to attend for interview on a voluntary basis. Face to face contact with young people assessed as 'high risk' or subject to 'intensive supervision and surveillance' has also continued during this time and the input of experienced sessional workers has ensured that contact with this cohort could be made consistently during evenings and weekends as necessary. However, the numbers of staff available to offer physical one to one support has fluctuated as restrictions have eased and then tightened during this time. Nevertheless, it is pleasing that the core/critical business of the service has been maintained.
- 4.3 More recently, YOS staff have been equipped with the resources to function more effectively and most staff can see the benefits of working in a more flexible manner. However, the onset of Covid has also brought challenges in relation to managing risks both to the public and to the children known to our service. Importantly, since May last year, the YOS has continued to work with a skeleton staff from its office base in Merthyr Tydfil and this arrangement has provided invaluable support for those staff who require it the most. It also ensured effective on going communication with our partners and agencies outside the Cwm Taf

region. Similarly, the reopening of the YOS base in RCT has ensured that one to one supervision and various team meetings can take place whilst enabling practitioners to discuss challenges/problems and enjoy managerial and peer support within the workplace.

5. WHERE WE ARE NOW / FUTURE PRIORITIES.




- 5.1 The YOS is currently in the process of restructuring the service in order to meet the demands of Early Intervention and Prevention work which now accounts for the majority of our workload. As such, there is a requirement to create two area based prevention/early intervention teams to enhance the quality of prevention services for those most at risk of anti-social and/or offending behaviour. Prevention activity within YOS is increasingly involved in the management of more complex cases, and subsequently these teams will include social work and senior practitioner oversight to ensure children and families receive the right support at the right time. In addition, this aspect of the service will also be allocated more management capacity across the Cwm Taf region. Performance Data and a victim survey report can be found embedded into this document as background papers.
- 5.2 To a large degree, the restructure of the service is a response to a review of the youth justice system across England and Wales, and the YJB was asked to advise Welsh Gov't on the development of a 'Blueprint for Youth Justice for Wales'. A Blueprint Implementation Plan has now been drafted to take this work forward. Early Intervention and Prevention and a trauma informed, child focussed approach is central to the contents of the Blueprint, and a Project Board incorporating several workstreams has been set up to take the work forward. However, Cwm Taf YOS has already begun to embed a trauma informed approach to better meet the needs of young people who enter the into the youth justice system and who have experienced a number of adverse childhood experiences (ACE's).
- 5.3 The YOS utilises the Children and Communities Grant to develop, deliver and coordinate prevention services across the Cwm Taf area. Some of this work is coordinated alongside the Resilient Families Service (RFS) and also ensures that the Cwm Taf YOS Prevention Service can provide a swift and proportionate response to anti social behaviour (ASB), Restorative Justice Street Disposals (YRD's) and respond quickly to crisis referrals from the Children's Services Dept. Outreach work engaging with young people in identified hotspot areas resumed in July last year and this work continues alongside our police colleagues.
- 5.4 The YOS continues to expand its use of a Viewpoint data feedback system to ensure the voice of service users is heard and which will inform the future development of the service. The YOS currently completes a specific online questionnaire with children who offend and a separate restorative justice survey for victims of child crime.
- 5.5 The YOS education training and employment (ETE) team has continued to support young people through the past 10 months and have trained a group of community volunteers to engage with individuals (remotely and face to face) to help them to achieve their potential. Furthermore, the YOS has continued its reparation work with young people in the community in a safe manner, whilst contributing, alongside the

YOS police officers to facilitate face to face mediation in care homes where some children have experienced difficulties, many of which are linked to Covid restrictions.

- 5.6 The YOS has recently negotiated CAMHS provision with Senior Health Managers to provide increased support for staff dealing with young people who present with more complex well being issues, and work continues in order to strengthen links with psychology, neuro development and speech and language provision. This provision is being monitored by the Offender Management Board.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The service is currently dealing with staffing issues that weren't quite as apparent during the first lockdown period in spring of last year. These include increased sickness rates, the care of vulnerable family members and home schooling/childcare issues as a result of school closures. Anxieties may be further increased by the uncertainties of the restructure of the service and future accommodation for YOS staff in the medium to longer term. It should be recognised that the YOS 'Transition to Recovery' is very much linked into local authority recovery plans.
- 6.2 The potential impact of future Covid restrictions, service changes and the risks associated with potential changes to (yet unconfirmed) grant funding will need to be monitored closely to ensure that Cwm Taf YOS can, alongside its key partners, properly meet the demands, aims and objectives ahead and to deliver better outcomes for young people who offend or who are at risk of becoming involved in offending behaviour.

BACKGROUND PAPERS		
Title of Document (s)	Date	Document Location
YOS Transition to Recovery Plan	Sept 2020	 Cwm Taf Covid19 Recovery Plan Sept 2
YOS Performance		 YOS Performance figures.docx
YOS Victim Survey		 YOS Victim Surveys.docx

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