



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL HEALTH AND WELLBEING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee held on Monday, 8 February 2021 at 5.00 pm .

County Borough Councillors - Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee Members in attendance:-

Councillor R Yeo (Chair)

Councillor S Evans	Councillor J Williams
Councillor P Howe	Councillor G Stacey
Councillor W Jones	Councillor E Griffiths
Councillor L De Vet	Councillor G Jones
Councillor S Powderhill	

Officers in attendance:-

Mr A Wilkins, Director of Legal Services
Mr N Elliott, Director of Adult Services
Mr P Mee, Group Director Community & Children's Services
Ms S Nowell, Head of Transformation

County Borough Councillors in attendance:-

Councillor W Lewis – Vice Chair Overview and Scrutiny

19 Declarations of Interest

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

20 Minutes

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the 8th December 2020 as an accurate reflection of the meeting.

21 Consultation Links

Members acknowledged the consultation links which were provided for their information and **RESOLVED** to note any consultations that are relevant to the remit of the Committee.

22 Adult Services Covid 19 response and Summary of the Support Offered to Adult Carers

The Director of Adult Services explained to Members that the purpose of the report is to update Members of the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee with the on-going response to Covid-19 and also to provide Members with a summary of the support offered to adult carers in Rhondda Cynon Taf during the pandemic as requested by Members at a previous meeting.

The Director of Adult Services highlighted to Members that the Covid-19 pandemic has been an unprecedented challenge for all but none more so than the health and social care sector.

The Director continued and reminded Members that at its meetings on the [14th September 2020](#) and [8th December 2020](#) the Committee received updates in relation to the on-going response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Director explained that the pandemic has meant that Adult Services has needed to implement extensive new national guidance and new ways of working, in partnership with health and social care providers and partners, to ensure the continued delivery of quality care and support services through the pandemic.

The Director of Adult Services explained that on 20th December 2020 Wales entered Alert Level 4 restrictions in response to the new strain of coronavirus. It was explained that despite these new restrictions Adult Services has continued to work within the statutory duties of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014, although there continues to be some temporary disruption while we prioritise services and modify care and support offers based on assessed needs and risk. It was highlighted that assessments continue to take a person-centre approach as far as practicable, although the focus will be on those with greatest need. Majority of contact with people has had to continue through telephone contact, with face to face contact only be used in critical situations.

It was brought to Members attention workloads remain high and caseloads are becoming increasingly more complex as the current COVID-19 pandemic continues and there is a waiting list of cases awaiting allocation across Care and Support and in the ACE (Occupational Therapy) Team. As a result, additional external support continues to be commissioned to reduce assessment and review backlogs.

The Director continued and provided Members with a COVID-19 update on the areas:

- Hospital Discharges
- Care Homes
- Domiciliary Care
- Day and Respite Services
- Vaccination and Testing Programmes
- Workforce
- Support providers

The Director also reminded Members of the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee that at its meeting on the 8th December 2020, Members requested further information on the support offered to adult carers in Rhondda Cynon Taf as they were concerned about the extra pressures being placed on families during these unprecedented times.

The Head of Care and Support provided Member with a summary of support offered to adult carers which is attached at appendix 1 of the report, some of the key points are below:

- The Carers Support Project (CSP) has provided one-to-one telephone support to carers throughout the pandemic and from September all support activities have been delivered virtually. This has included social events, workshops and learning events and opportunities to improve mental and physical wellbeing. Project staff have also delivered various packs with at-home activities including art and wellness packs.
- Currently the Happy @ Home grant scheme allows carers to apply for up to £300 for items to boost their wellbeing at home. This is proving extremely popular and is likely to be oversubscribed.
- CSP staff have also ensured distribution of personal protective equipment for carers in Rhondda Cynon Taf.
- The Carers Counselling service attached to CSP has experienced high demand and has successfully obtained short-term additional funding until the end of March 2021 to help to reduce the waiting list.
- A pilot project to improve the uptake of and process for carer assessments, called Carer Conversations, saw new guidance issued to staff at the start of 2020. An audit of completed carer assessments during the year was carried out in December 2020, highlighting excellent practice and identifying areas of further work.
- Respite services has continued to support unpaid carers, ensuring they are able to have a break from their role and look after their own wellbeing. Residential and nursing placements, sitting services and day centre provision for adults with learning disabilities or dementia, have continued to operate despite the restrictions.
- Once restrictions allow, all-age carers services in the County 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 the office will effectively act as a carers hub for Rhondda Cynon Taf.
- A scoping exercise is currently underway to establish the possibility of the Council achieving the Carer Friendly Employer accreditation awarded by Carers Trust. This will require input from all Council departments and all levels of management and is aimed at supporting our working carers.

The Director concluded his report by explaining that the work and dedication of all care staff and providers in Rhondda Cynon Taf will

continue to provide quality of care and support to people and carers throughout the pandemic.

The Chair thanked the officers for a very informative report and opened up the meeting for Members observations and questions.

A Member thanked the whole of the service for the excellent work that had been done over this time and asked for clarity on the “Happy @ Home Scheme” as his concerns were that if the scheme was very popular and is likely to be oversubscribed then there is a need for the service and asked what we were doing to continue with the scheme.

The Head of Care and Support explained that even though the scheme was oversubscribed that through additional grant funding we are able to cover the scheme at present, although going forward we would need to consider how we open up for carers in a sustainable way and how direct payments could be used differently to offer that opportunity.

The Member thanked the officer for the response and suggested that the scheme be offered on an on-going basis.

The Director stated that we will have learnt lessons during the pandemic about doing things different as we move forward, with this being one, and we will look to support to the scheme along with utilising existing direct payments opportunities.

Another Member echoed thanks to the services throughout the pandemic and asked a question relating to waiting list of cases awaiting allocation in the Occupational Therapy Team. The Member asked if there were arrangements in place to manage the waiting list and how the service would improve waiting times going forward.

The Director explained that there is an ongoing waiting list, which was in place before Covid, and it would vary based on demand and service capacity, although all cases were prioritised based on need and risk. He continued to explain that apart from current Covid-19 related pressures, one of the re-occurring problems faced by the service related to the recruitment of Occupational Therapists and within the last two weeks 2 of the current 4 vacancies had been filled which should help reduce current waiting times. It was also explained that over the Winter period the service receives parking bay applications which increases the waiting list but once assessed the waiting list would reduce.

A Member asked for clarification in relation to parking permits for paid carers as some had reported difficulties parking when visiting people's homes, which impacted the length of time allocated to provide the care and support required.

The Director explained that he was unaware of any issues relating to this matter, but if members are aware of any specific issues, then please let

the service know and we will investigate the matter further.

After further discussion Members **RESOLVED** to;

- Acknowledge the report
- Thank staff and carers for all their hard work going forward.

23 Chair's Review and Close

The Chair thanked Members and Officers for their attendance at this evenings meeting and wished them a good evening.

This meeting closed at 18:00pm

**CLLR R. YEO
CHAIR.**