

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE SAFEGUARDING, COMMUNITIES AND WELLBEING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE/CRIME AND DISORDER SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD IN MEETING ROOM 1, GUILDHALL ON WEDNESDAY, 28 FEBRUARY 2018

MEMBERS

Councillor Derek Wright, Chair
Councillor Beverley Parry-Jones, Vice-Chair

Councillor	Trevor Bates	Councillor	John Pritchard
“	I David Bithell, MBE	“	* Rondo Roberts
“	* Brian Cameron	“	Debbie Wallice
“	* Krista Childs	“	* Andy Williams
“	* Russell Gilmartin	“	Nigel Williams
“	Gwenfair Jones		

*Absent

Also Present – Councillors William Baldwin, Lead Member for Children’s Services.

48 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Brian Cameron, Krista Childs, Russell Gilmartin, Rondo Roberts and Andy Williams.

49 DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTERESTS, IF ANY

There were no declarations of interest.

50 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 17 January 2018 were submitted.

AGREED – That the Minutes of the meeting held on 17 January 2018 be signed as a correct record.

51 CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE DEPARTMENTAL SERVICE ACTIVITY AND PERFORMANCE HALF YEARLY UPDATE (QUARTERS 1 - 2) FOR 2017/2018

The Lead Member for Children’s Services submitted a report (HCSC/02/2018) which advised the Committee of key performance management information within Children’s Social Care Services for the period 1 April 2017 – 30 September 2017. Where appropriate, comparison data such as Welsh averages has also been included. The data provides elected Members with the opportunity to monitor performance and discuss any issues that relates to the information.

The Lead Member, supported by the Head of Children’s Social Care and the Policy & Projects Officer, introduced the report. The number of contacts/ referrals to Children’s Social Care services increased by 5.1% during 2016/17 and this trend

has continued into 2017/18. A Member Workshop on performance management information was held in November 2017 and the content of this report was compiled following the discussion at the workshop and contained a mix of both national and local measures / information.

Members considered the report and made reference to the following matters in particular:

- PMC024 – The percentage of assessments completed for children within statutory timescale: It was noted that Wrexham fell just below the Welsh average for Quarter 1 and Quarter 2 for assessments concluded within 42 days. In response, the Head of Children’s Social Care commented that this dip in performance was linked to vacancies and recruitment issues in the Assessment & Intervention Team. In addition, Team Managers will not sign off assessments as complete unless there was evidence that every child/ young person had been seen and spoken to by a social worker to ensure that their views were considered, as part of the assessment process. Whilst this had an adverse impact on the department’s compliance with statutory timescales, it was considered necessary to minimise risk to the child / young person.
- The department had also set a local target of an average of 60 working days for those assessments not completed within the statutory timescale and this target had been met during the first two quarters.
- Members requested that in future, reports include the number of assessments completed within the statutory timescale, in addition to the percentage figure, to give a better indication of the number of assessments involved in each client group.
- With reference to Workforce and Training, Members requested further information on the size of each client team to demonstrate the proportion of vacancies against the full quota of staff. The Head of Children’s Social Care commented that the department continued to maintain good performance in relation to allocating cases to qualified social workers for all client categories. Due to complex work patterns, there had been difficulties in calculating the number of full-time equivalent staff in time for this meeting but this information will be included in future committee reports.
- The Head of Children’s Social Care confirmed that vacant Social Worker posts were covered by substantive or agency staff. She agreed to e-mail Members with the cost incurred by the department in employing agency staff over the last three years.
- Further information was requested on the measures being undertaken to recruit and retain social worker staff. The Head of Children’s Services commented that a focussed and high profile recruitment campaign had been carried out in 2017 and a further campaign was being prepared for 2018 in light of the previous findings. The comparatively lower salaries paid in Wrexham compared with neighbouring local authorities has been a factor in not being able to recruit staff.

- It was noted that a significant proportion of referrals received by the Department related to concerns for children placed in Wrexham by other local authorities either into private residential homes or independent foster places. Several Members expressed concern on the robustness of the notification system in place to inform the department of such placements.
- There was an expectation that due care had been taken by the local authority in placing the child within Wrexham and the child remained in the care of the originating local authority, however, should there be a safeguarding referral, legal responsibility for safeguarding the child rested with Wrexham Council. The Head of Children's Social Care commented that it was difficult to quantify the costs incurred by the department in such instances.
- Further information was sought on how the department promoted the North Wales Adoption Service and recruited potential foster carers. The Head of Children's Social Care outlined local and national initiatives undertaken recently undertaken and that Wrexham was one of only two authorities in Wales that employed a dedicated Market and Recruitment Officer. In addition, where there were viable family members to care for children, the service offered help and advice for them to remain within their birth family.
- The Head of Children's Social Care suggested that to help Members further understand the function and demands on the Children's Social Care services a Member Workshop be arranged to identify a child's journey through the care system.

AGREED –

- (i) That the report be noted and that officers be congratulated on the department gaining above average performance in the National Performance Framework in most cases, but requested that specific attention be paid to the number of assessments completed within statutory timescales (PMC024).**
- (ii) That the Head of Children's Social Care arranges an All-Member Workshop on the 'Journey through Care'.**

52

WORK PROGRAMME

The Head of Finance submitted a report to assist Members in agreeing a list of potential scrutiny topic areas for the next 12 months and possibly longer term.

The Scrutiny Facilitator (Suzanne Price) introduced the report and advised that every scrutiny committee has been encouraged to review its work programme to ensure that it was outcome focussed and that scrutiny added value to the Council's decision making process. In addition to regular items awaiting to be scheduled, the Committee has identified several budget related issues at its December 2017 meeting, Police Community Support Officers and certain areas of Adult Social Care, and these have been included within the work programme. An All-Member

Workshop on Telecare had been arranged for Tuesday, 17 April 2018 at 10.00am at the Guildhall, Wrexham.

Members considered the report and raised the following matters in particular:

- Following the response from Huw Irranca-Davies to the Chair's letter on proposed Welsh Government financial support for the statutory Play Sufficiency Duty, Members agreed its content be noted and no further action be taken.
- Further consideration should be given to how scrutiny can be included within the Revenue Budget preparation timetable. The Scrutiny Facilitator reminded Members that the Head of Finance had been invited to the March meeting of the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice Chairs Co-ordinating Group to discuss this matter.
- That the meeting with Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB) arranged for Monday, 30 April, 2018 be confirmed and questions from Members to be submitted to the March meeting of this committee. It was further agreed to recommend to the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice Chairs Co-ordinating Group that the meeting be webcast.
- It was suggested that the Governor of HMP Berwyn be invited to attend a meeting of this Scrutiny Committee to discuss the operation of the prison. If the invitation was accepted and due to the perceived public interest in this matter, the meeting be considered for web-casting.
- A Member suggested that the Council's policy for Home Schooling for Children be identified as a topic for further scrutiny.

The Chair commented that the next stage will be for the Scrutiny Facilitator to consult with the relevant Lead Members and officers, and submit a revised programme of work together with Scrutiny Topic Selection Forms for any new topics identified, to the March meeting of this Scrutiny Committee.

AGREED – That the report be noted and that the Chair writes to the Governor of HMP Berwyn to invite him to attend a meeting of this Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Derek Wright
Chair