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Health and Care Scrutiny Committee Thursday, 11 April 2024

## MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE HEALTH AND CARE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD BY ZOOM ON THURSDAY, 11 APRIL 2024

### PRESENT

County Councillors: A Jenner (Chair), G E Jones, L Rijnenberg, C Robinson.

Cabinet Members in attendance  
County Councillors S Cox, S C Davies.

Officers in attendance (Powys County Council)  
Nina Davies (Director of Social Services and Housing), Commissioning and Partnerships), Sharon Frewin (Head of Adult Services), Sharon Powell (Head of Children's Services), and Joanna Harris (Senior Strategic Commissioning Manager) Charlie Darwin (Senior Manager Corporate Parenting) Holly Gordon (Safeguarding Manager).

<b>1. APOLOGIES</b>
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Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Chris Walsh and B Breeze, Jane Thomas (Director of Corporate Services/151 Officer).

<b>2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b>
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There were no Declarations of Interest from Members relating to items to be considered on the agenda.

<b>3. DISCLOSURE OF PARTY WHIPS</b>
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The Committee did not receive any disclosures of prohibited party whips which a Member had been given in relation to the meeting in accordance with Section 78(3) of the Local Government Measure 2011.

<b>4. MINUTES</b>
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The minutes of the meeting held on the 8<sup>th</sup> March 2024 were agreed by Committee members present, as a true and accurate reflection of the meeting and ratified accordingly by the Chair.

<b>5. FOSTER CARER ANNUAL FEEDBACK REVIEW</b>
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**Background:**

Feedback is provided through the following methods:

- Following the Form F assessment process
- Foster Panel
- Skills to foster training
- Locality foster carer support groups

- Quarterly Heads of Service and Senior Management meetings
- Foster Carer well-being events
- Corporate Parenting Group.
- Direct supervision.
- The Fostering Network post exit interviews
- Via the participation officer.

Feedback is used to inform the service on:

- Shaping the new proposed Fostering Framework
- Developing Service Delivery – key themes provided with Foster Wales and other national commitments.
- Resolving issues as they arise
- Listening to ideas from foster carer to learn from both negative and positive experiences.
- Understanding reasons for leaving as part of retention work.
- Considering what resources were required.

<b>Issues Raised by the Committee:</b>	<b>Responses Received:</b>
What has been developed in the last year to reduce numbers of Foster Carers leaving.	Foster carer feedback on the changes in particular in relation to children’s Social Workers was challenging, progress has been made within the Service to create workforce stability, and strongly evidenced in the Grow our Own model, with a more permanent management and a stronger workforce. These challenges appeared to have reduced through the Foster Carer feedback, catch up session and Panel
Has support when allegations made against Foster Carers ever been raised as a theme in feedback.	Foster Wales and the region had raised, there has been specific training supplied. The Fostering Network also supply support and all foster career are encouraged to access. With the LA whenever allegations were made Foster Carers were always supported by Social Work staff.
After a Foster Carer left the LA were there any follow up discussions 6-12 months later to establish reasons.	As no longer Powys staff after deciding to leave the LA do not have any ongoing established relationship. We gain a good understanding through the supervision process of reasons, and these would feed into the Panel process. Any themes would be addressed within the Service. Foster Network will undertake exit interviews moving forward
Would information for potential Foster Carers that start the process but may drop out part way through prior to	Monthly meetings through the Not-For-Profit Board tracked all enquiries and processes as moved through the

<p>panel. The process can appear overwhelming, was assurance and support given.</p>	<p>system. Reasons why an interest may not be pursued is captured, any gaps in assessments completed prior to proceeding to the mainstream Supervising Social Work staff. The Skills to Foster training was encouraged and provided beforehand to offer a broader perspective and provide them with tools to make informed decisions.</p>
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<b>6.</b>	<b>SAFER ACCOMMODATION</b>
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**Background:**

- WG provided Capital and Revenue grant funding to provide Safe Accommodation for Children with complex needs to each region.
- PCC and PTHB worked in partnership on the design and delivery of the provision.
- Care Inspectorate Wales registration was secured in March 2024.
- Recruitment of a full staff team has been achieved embarking on a training and induction programme.
- The Model of Care would provide clear pathways to community-based care with unnecessary admissions to inpatient care and secure accommodation being avoided.
- Admission would be agreed via a matching Panel, this service would not be a provider of last resort provision.
- In terms of Governance a Partnership Project Board oversees the project and reports to the Regional Partnership Executive Board.

**Next Steps:**

- Support the young people to settle in their new placements.
- Consider future referral requests and matching for a third young person.
- Prepare young people for transition to adulthood.
- Continue to recruit staff as required.
- Work with young people in placement towards step down.
- Review the Model of Care and therapeutic intervention support.
- Training and Development.
- Therapeutic support for the staff team.

<b>Issues Raised by the Committee:</b>	<b>Responses Received:</b>
<p>Was 3 the maximum number of spaces at the placement.</p>	<p>Yes, 3 was the maximum number given the size of the property and the volume of staff required.</p>
<p>How would the young people access education provision and how was it managed from the site.</p>	<p>The young peoples' Care Plans cover their Health, Care and Educational needs. The education would be tailored to each young person's individual need. The young people at the placement are</p>

	<p>all Children Looked After (CLA), they have their individual care plans, which are reviewed by an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) with any challenge or issues raised with the Head of Service.</p>
<p>In terms of the PCC cost of placements, were there any comparative data for what the costs would have been if this provision were not in place i.e. savings would be realised.</p>	<p>In terms of costs, even though have our own children in our own homes does not necessarily equate to lower placement costs. There were reduced costs in staff time and staff travel time. Costs for placement across the UK currently were increasing in line for increases in demand. Ongoing the health element costs would be met by PTHB and with care needs met by the LA via the CLA budget.</p>
<p>Was there a need for more of this type of provision</p>	<p>There was no plan to develop any further settings. There would be a period of evaluation on the current provision to ascertain its effectiveness, had expectation and needs of individuals, PCC and PTHB been met.</p>
<p>How realistic was stepping down given that there were health need implications.</p>	<p>The service remained realistic and optimistic that individual could be stepped down from this project. An individual would not remain in a placement when it was no longer than absolutely necessary or required. The Service would review the need and transitional plans. Data on step down was captured for the Closer to Home Board, information from which could be made available to committee later in the year to compare and contrast.</p>
<p>Was the Child's voice heard and taken into account throughout the matching process.</p>	<p>Totally, the Social Worker would provide the child's voice within the Matching Panel meeting.</p>
<p>Were there any contingency plans if the Registered Manager was no longer in post.</p>	<p>A contingency plan in a climate where residential staff and care is problematic is difficult. In terms of recruitment there was a very targeted campaign using leaflet drops, in respect of retention reviewing how to develop and succession plan the Grow our Own through to the residential side. Lessons learned from the last year for where gaps were, what could be done differently and how. The service was</p>

	<p>looking to develop a practice framework that matches that for Social Work which would standardise the quality of care and would feed into specific training programme.</p> <p>In relation to the Not-for-Profit Agenda, WG were keen that all LA's progress this. There could be the opportunity to tap into staff from other residential home companies that are moving out of Wales.</p>
<p>What was the expected age range of young people at the setting and would ,mainstream education be a consideration.</p>	<p>The facility is available for those young person up to 18years of age but most likely for the 14 to 15 years upwards and looking at a collaborative approach with schools and the virtual school.</p>

<b>7.</b>	<b>RESPONDING TO POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL'S RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION CHALLENGE IN SOCIAL CARE</b>
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**Background:** Report provided with the agenda.

<b>Issues Raised by the Committee:</b>	<b>Responses Received:</b>
<p>What was the percentage response by staff to the survey and was the survey also open to agency staff.</p>	<p>Yes, the survey was opened to all staff within Children's Services, with responses received from approximately a third of the total staff.</p>
<p>Committee requested the difference in costs between permanent member and agency staff. Would it also be possible to evaluate which teams had higher percentage of agency staff.</p> <p>Were agency workers more focussed in certain departments, in terms of recruitment what was being done to bring the agency staff across to permanent positions.</p>	<p>In terms of costs, agency costs were approximately double the permanent staff, but would need to forward the specific data. Costs benefit analysis was undertaken on daily, monthly and annual rates.</p> <p>Assurance was given that within Children's Services there were 21 agency staff, the service were aware of who they were and which teams they were supporting. The team visited as part of the Laming visits was a difficult team to recruit into, due to the experience and knowledge that was required by staff, with another team largely supported by agency staff.</p> <p>The Service was reviewing how those team could possibly be targeted in a different recruitment way, however, we have a Grow Our Own programme with a cohort of 8 coming through this year. The key will be to manage the newly qualified staff safely to come into</p>

	<p>teams which were much more complex, what support was required to help them grow, learn and develop, to retain in those teams moving forward.</p> <p>Similar position in adults – agency seeking permanent employment vacancy levels dropping, HR and WOD to create a wellbeing event as per CS previously</p>
<p>Correlation between Grow our Own and agency was clear with visible improvement over the last few years. What percentage of the social worker workforce would 21 agency staff equate to.</p>	<p>At present the total number of vacant SW positions was 19 The service has 21 agency staff which was approximately 20% of the workforce. There would always be a need for agency workers within Children’s Services, as individuals through natural progression move on or leave the LA.</p>
<p>How were the 9 apprentices in Flying Start recruited and what level were they working at.</p>	<p>The information on how recruited, could be sourced and forwarded.</p>
<p>The Committee were interested whether the recruitment process used for Flying Start apprentices could be replicated for other apprenticeship schemes within the LA.</p>	<p>The Service would review and advise.</p>
<p>In regard to the wellbeing initiatives noted in the report, Committee Members attended the in-house Psychologist workshop at the National Safeguarding Conference late last year, were these roles at capacity, if not was there any scope for the initiatives to be applied to other service areas within the LA.</p>	<p>Wellbeing of the workforce formed part of the integrated Business Plan (IBP), to build a resilient workforce. The trauma and impact of work within Children’s Services can never be underestimated, i.e., secondary trauma, what is read, seen, done. The individuals in those specific roles are not at full capacity currently, but there was potential consider different positions to further to grow, develop, strengthen and support the workforce. Shared across directorates and wider – It was acknowledged that good practice should be shared across not only other directorates but corporately through CLT.</p>
<p>Where and how were posts advertised.</p>	<p>Corporate Communications team evaluates the throughfall clicks on social media etc. to ascertain the level of interest. Corporately the Communications Team liaise with local press. Radio has been mentioned for advertising, however this medium was incredibly expensive, as needed to</p>

What were the next steps in terms of recruitment and retention strategies.	compare costs against outcomes. From the Service perspective, to remain stable, calm and build on the successes of the Grow Our Own model and establishing a progression framework to retain and support the wellbeing of new and newly qualified staff, whilst reducing the agency staff numbers. To ensure staff have access to development opportunities, and the promotion of good news stories. There continues to be a national shortage of Social Workers, which creates recruitment challenges. Nationally work has been undertaken via a memorandum of cooperation to reduce the movement of agency workers due to differing pay rates.
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<b>8.</b>	<b>WORK PROGRAMME</b>
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The forward work programme was noted by Members present.

- Health and Social Care Academy update to be requested.

**County Councillor A Jenner (Chair)**

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