HEALTHY LIVING AND SOCIAL CARE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a remote meeting held on 7th November, 2023.

The Committee agenda is available here.

The recording of the meeting is available here.

Present: Councillor N.C. Thomas (Vice-Chair in the Chair); Councillors G. Ball, C.A. Cave, M. Cowpe, R. Fisher, E.J. Goodjohn and J. Lynch-Wilson.

Also present: G. John (Cabinet Member for Leisure, Sport and Wellbeing), Dr. I.J. Johnson and E. Williams (Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health).

495   ANNOUNCEMENT –

Prior to the commencement of the business of the Committee, the Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer read the following statement: "May I remind everyone present that the meeting will be live streamed as well as recorded via the internet and this recording archived for future viewing."

The Vice-Chair of the Committee advised that both themselves, and the Chair of the Committee, had considered the results of a recent survey undertaken amongst both Committee Members and Supporting Officers in relation to the start time of meetings for the Committee. Based on the feedback received, it was apparent and subsequently agreed to maintain a 5.00 p.m. start time for meetings of the Healthy Living and Social Care Scrutiny Committee.

496   APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE –

These were received from Councillors J.E. Charles (Chair), I. Buckley, A.M. Collins, J.M. Norman and C. Stallard.

497   MINUTES –

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 9th October, 2023 be approved as a correct record.

498   DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

No declarations of interest were received.

499   VALE, VALLEYS AND CARDIFF REGIONAL ADOPTION
COLLABORATIVE ANNUAL REPORT (DSS) –

The Regional Adoption Manager presented the 8th report of its kind, the purpose of which was to provide Committee with the appended Vale, Valleys and Cardiff Adoption Collaborative Review of Service and Annual Performance Report. Vale, Valleys, and Cardiff Adoption Collaborative (VVC) was one of five regional Collaboratives which formed part of the National Adoption Service (NAS) and provided an adoption service on behalf of the Vale of Glamorgan Council, Cardiff Council, Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council and Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council. The Vale of Glamorgan Council was the host authority for the Collaborative.

The report covered the period from 1st April, 2022 to 31st March, 2023 and incorporated the reporting requirements set out in the Legal Agreement underpinning the Collaborative and the requirement to review the service every six months as set out in regulation.

The Officer apprised the Committee on the governance and scrutiny of the regional arrangements at a local level, staff changes and areas of service development. The report also provided key performance information relating to the placement of children for adoption, recruitment and assessment of adopters, and the provision of adoption support services.

The Officer also highlighted the key challenges and future priorities for the service in terms of developing the service against an ever-increasing national improvement agenda as set out in pages 21 through 23 of Appendix A.

The Officer then drew Members' attention to the Appendices within the appended report that provided data in respect of key performance measures in respect of children, marketing activity, adopter recruitment, adoption support and the Adoption Panel. This information was broken down by Local Authority.

In conclusion, the Officer advised that, overall, the collaborative had had a pleasing end of year result across the service.

Following the Regional Adoption Manager's presentation, the Vice-Chair of the Committee offered the Committee's thanks for the comprehensive report and noted that the pressures on the service were made very clear.

The Vice-Chair subsequently invited comments from the Committee, to which, Councillor Cave also thanked officers for the report and noted that there was a lot within the report to be proud of including the fact that there had been only one adoption breakdown over recent years, which was very positive and indicative of the levels of Officer dedication. Councillor Cave then referred to Funding Approved for Therapeutic Packages - April 2022 to March 2023, as set out in the Appendix 3 Page 3 and noted that the average spend for the Vale of Glamorgan Council was significantly higher than the other three Local Authorities in relation to therapeutic interventions post adoption. Therefore, Councillor Cave queried

whether the higher average spend for the Vale of Glamorgan had contributed to the Council's lack of adoption breakdowns.

In response, the Regional Adoption Manager clarified that the children captured within the data were not yet subject to an Adoption Order and remained looked after children. For further clarification, the Officer also advised that an adoptive home breakdown in the pre-adoption stage was described as a 'disruption' and therefore a post-adoption breakdown was referred to as a 'breakdown.' The Officer also added that Officers were conscious of support costs increasing and these continued to monitored via the Management Board. The costs related to a very small number of children however the increase in care package costs had resulted in the figures increasing.

In reply, Councillor Cave thanked the Officer for their reply and highlighted that the support the Council provided post- adoption was just as important as the support given prior to the formal adoption taking place and therefore the figures were not necessarily seen as a negative.

The Head of Children and Young People Services then added that Officers were mindful of the increased figure which may appear disproportionate and advised that further analysis was taking place whilst also ensuring that the right support was provided to the children concerned.

In response to a subsequent question from Councillor Cave, the Head of Children and Young People Services advised that updated information would be presented in the next Annual Report provided to the Committee, however, if earlier information was requested by Committee, this could also be provided. The Vice-Chair subsequently noted that including the findings within the next Annual Report to the Committee would ensure that the findings were also available for public consumption.

The Vice-Chair then moved discussion on to life journey materials for adopted children and noted that, due to photographs now being mostly digitised and not being printed by individuals, hard copy photographs were hard to come by for children recently adopted. Therefore, they questioned what the Council was doing to mitigate this in terms of creating life journey materials for adopted children.

In reply, the Head of Children and Young People Services advised that life journey books were unrecognisable in comparison to historical versions as processes and technology had developed significantly. There were now two life journey officers working alongside social workers to develop really creative books and materials. The availability of life journey materials was also prioritised in the decision making process and the Agency Decision Maker (the Head of Service) would not approve a match without these materials being available.

With no further comments or questions, the Committee subsequently

RECOMENDED –

(1)   T H A T the Vale, Valleys and Cardiff Adoption Collaborative Annual Report 2022-23 be noted.

(2)   T H A T the Committee continues to receive annual reports.

Reasons for recommendations

(1)   Having regard to the contents of the report on the work of the Collaborative undertaken to date and to exercise scrutiny of the key statutory function.

(2)   To ensure that Committee maintains close scrutiny of the regional service on a regular basis in line with the requirements of the Legal Agreement which underpins the Collaborative.

500   TELECARE SERVICES UPDATE (DSS) -

The Operational Manager for Locality Services presented the report, the purpose of which was to update Members on the work of the Telecare Service over the last 12 months and advise Members on Service Developments following the Telecare Service Review.

Telecare continued to be an integral element of the Care and Support services available to people across the Vale of Glamorgan. It enabled people to live independently at home for as long as possible by offering reassurance and support to family carers. Telecare provided valuable information regarding the health and wellbeing of citizens to professionals and family; and provided responsive access to emergency support when needed.

The Telecare Service had started and was still undergoing a large-scale transformation programme to improve its base technology and prepare the service for the 2025 Telecommunications switchover from analogue to Digital signalling.

In the past 12 months the following significant changes had been made:

•   The old analogue Telecare computer databased use to receive alarm calls, known as the Alarm Receiving Centre (ARC) had been replaced, with a fully digital version.
•   A 24/7 call centre had been in operation since August 2022 and the Vale of Glamorgan Council was proud to be the first adopter of a digital platform in Wales which had been a great success.
•   A 24/7 emergency falls response service with St. John Ambulance had been introduced for all telecare customers which supported the University Health Board (UHB) to manage demand as well as reduce associated health care costs. It was estimated that the service had saved the UHB £726k for the current year and that this was estimated to increase to around £1m for the next. The number of individuals using the service had

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increased significantly since the last year with numbers rising from 30 to 120. At the time of the meeting, the average response time was 28 minutes and 32 seconds. The Fall Service also supported individuals to link with after care in order to avoid further falls.

- A programme to replace the analogue (hard wire) devices in customer homes with digital units had commenced with 41% of all old analogue devices being replaced to date.
- The services offered to citizens had been revised and simplified into four products which were easier to understand; Essential, Bronze, Silver and Gold.
- The service had been rebranded from TeleV to Vale Telecare which was more fitting to its vision, mission and purpose. It had been a very busy year for the team who had been very responsive to support the 2,500 customers now registered for the service.

The Officer then referred to paragraph 2.3 of the report which set out the Two-year Team Plan, over 12 projects, for the year ahead to build upon current success and enable continuous improvement of the service. In particular:

- Marketing Campaign: Telecare currently invested little in advertising and marketing. Over the next two years it would invest in website development, local advertising and reaching out to social care and health to highlight the advantages of the service to citizens to increase customer numbers, promote the brand and improve accessibility.
- Telecare Services Association (TSA) Accreditation: The TSA was a national advisory body for Telecare that offered a Quality Standards Framework for Telecare Services. At the present time, the current telecare service was not TSA accredited, however, the new platform and service changes offered an ideal opportunity to assess accreditation needs and begin the process.
- Innovative Device and Proactive Care Trials: The new UMO Alarm Receiving Centre offered the ability to use a wide range of technology. The need existed to set up trials of devices and set up new products outside of Telecare Essential, Bronze, Silver, and Gold packages.

The Vice-Chair began discussion on the item by stating their pride at the Vale of Glamorgan Council leading the way in relation to digital telecare services. They then invited Councillor Lynch-Wilson to address the Committee, who thanked officers for an interesting report and noted that individuals who had sadly fallen not only required support for the fall itself but also to manage the subsequent psychological fear in order for them to stay at home alone with confidence. Therefore, Councillor Lynch-Wilson offered her thanks to all officers for their valuable work on the matter.

In referring to the financial savings as presented by the Officer, the Vice-Chair recognised that savings were not just made financially but also in terms of social and human costs which were less quantifiable but probably significantly more than the financial costs stated. In response to a supplementary question from the Vice-Chair on the timeframe of service user figures provided, the Operational Manager

for Locality Services advised of the fall response figures in recent months as follows:

>   July 2023   148 individuals
>   August 2023   117 individuals
>   September 2023   130 individuals.

This gave an average figure of approximately 120 individuals per month over the last six months.

The Vice-Chair then referred to digital black spots in the Vale and how support was provided to individuals who did not have access to reliable broadband connections. In response, the Officer advised that with regard to devices available to be placed in homes, two sim cards would be installed within the devices to maintain a secure connection. It was difficult to pinpoint exact black spot locations within the Vale of Glamorgan as broadband availability was not a post-code specific matter and largely reliant on infrastructure within properties and local topography, however the Council's providers were aware of particular properties that had difficulties with regards to broadband connections and were looking into increasing connection options via ethernet connection.

In support, the Head of Adult Services and Vale Alliance added for reassurance that, if an alarm had been activated during an internet service outage, then the signal would continue to be sent to the Contact Centre as soon as a connection was re-established. Therefore the call would be considered as delayed rather than missed.

As a final question, the Vice-Chair asked officers if the Vale of Glamorgan was talking to the third sector in order to learn of new initiatives and working practices to improve its own. In response, the Head of Adult Services and Vale Alliance advised that the Council continued to work with Innovate Trust and that officers were continuously working with external partners to improve services. Therefore, the next version of the report as presented to the Committee would expand on partnership working and not just the telecare service.

In summary, the Vice-Chair noted the pride of the Committee in relation to the Council's telecare service, the huge success to date, as well as leading on innovation and development on the matter.

With no further comments or questions, the Committee subsequently

RECOMENDED –

(1)   T H A T the work and future developments of the Telecare service be noted.

(2)   T H A T Committee receives annual updates on the work of the Telecare Service and other partnership working.

(3)   T H A T the changes and advances planned for the service, as set out in paragraph 2.3 of the report, be noted.

Reasons for recommendations

(1)   Having regard to the contents of the report on the challenges, opportunities and strategic direction of the Vale of Glamorgan Council's Telecare Service.

(2)   To keep Members appraised of the work of the Telecare Service and associated developments.

(3)   To ensure that Scrutiny Members have the opportunity to review and inform the planned / future developments for the service.