



EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MULTI-LOCATIONAL MEETING HELD AT THE COUNCIL OFFICES PENALLTA HOUSE AND VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON THURSDAY 20TH FEBRUARY 2025 AT 5.30 P.M.

PRESENT:

Councillor D. Cushing - Chair

Councillors:

E.M. Aldworth, C. Bishop, A. Broughton-Pettit, M. Chacon-Dawson, M. Evans, A. Farina-Childs, C. Gordon, T. Heron, A. Leonard, J. Roberts, and S. Skivens.

Cabinet Member:

Councillor E. Forehead (Social Care).

Together with:

Officers: G. Jenkins (Interim Corporate Director of Social Services), J. Williams (Assistant Director Adult Services), A. West (Place Shaping and Sustainable Communities for Learning Service Manager), M. Jacques (Scrutiny Officer), S. Hughes (Committee Services Officer) and J. Lloyd (Committee Services Officer).

Also in attendance:

Co-opted Members D. Bezzina (Parent Governor Representative), K. Stacey (Parent Governor Representative), and P. Ireland (NEU).

RECORDING AND VOTING ARRANGEMENTS

The Chair reminded those present that the meeting was being live streamed, and a recording would be made available to view via the Council's website, except for discussions involving confidential or exempt items. [Click Here To View](#).

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors P. Cook, B. Miles, T. Parry, J. Simmonds, J. Winslade, K. Woodland, and co-opted Members K. Cole (NEU), and D. Davies (Caerphilly Governors Association).

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received.

3. EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 26TH NOVEMBER 2024.

It was moved and seconded that the minutes of the meeting held on 26th November 2024, be approved as a correct record. By way of Microsoft Forms and verbal communication this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee held on 26th November 2024 (minute nos. 1 – 10) be approved as a correct record.

4. SPECIAL EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 3RD DECEMBER 2024.

It was moved and seconded that the minutes of the meeting held on 3rd December 2024, be approved as a correct record. By way of Microsoft Forms and verbal communication (and in noting there were 13 For, 0 Against, and 1 Abstention) this was agreed by the majority present.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Special Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee held on 3rd December 2024 (minute nos. 1 – 4) be approved as a correct record.

5. CONSIDERATION OF ANY MATTER REFERRED TO THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CALL-IN PROCEDURE.

There had been no matters referred to the Scrutiny Committee in accordance with the call-in procedure.

6. EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The report informed the Committee of the Forward Work Programme planned for the period January 2025 to March 2025.

A Member requested that an update report on the Families First programme be added to the Forward Work Programme.

A Member also requested a general report on Social Care packages available for those diagnosed with degenerative illnesses, and to include the number of residents receiving help and timescales for those accessing care.

A Member highlighted that despite receiving a verbal update on the same subject he still expected the report on CCTV cameras in schools, originally requested and agreed by Committee Members at the Committee's meeting on 15th October 2024. Officers thanked the Member for the clarification, and advised Members that a review of CCTV on school sites was currently ongoing, and assured Members that this report would be added to the Forward Work Programme.

Following consideration of the report, three additional reports were requested (an update on the Families First Programme, an update on social care packages available to people diagnosed with degenerative diseases, and a report on CCTV cameras in schools that was previously requested and agreed by Committee Members at the meeting on 15th October 2024), and it was moved and seconded that, subject to these additions, the recommendation

be approved. By way of Microsoft Forms and verbal communication, this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that the Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme, as amended, be published on the Councils' website.

7. CABINET REPORTS

It was confirmed that there had been no requests for the Cabinet reports listed on the agenda to be brought forward for discussion at the meeting.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Consideration was given to the following report.

8. CARE INSPECTORATE WALES (CIW) INSPECTION OF CAERPHILLY FOSTERING SERVICE.

Councillor E. Forehead (Cabinet Member for Social Care) introduced the report of the regulatory inspection of Caerphilly Fostering Service undertaken by Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW).

Members were advised that CIW undertook an inspection of Caerphilly County Borough Council's Fostering Service between 29th July and 2nd August 2024. The inspection focused on the extent to which the Fostering Service is complying with the legislative regulations set out within The Local Authority Fostering Services (Wales) Regulations 2018. The inspection also focused on the outcomes for individual children who rely on the service.

The full Inspection Report was attached at Appendix 1 and was being presented to Scrutiny Committee for information purposes only.

A Member noted the CIW report and thanked officers and foster carers for the services they provide. The Member sought clarification on the compliance issues raised in the report, regarding the six-monthly report, and also noted the reference to emergency foster carers in the report. Members were advised that regulations were relaxed during Covid, and the six-monthly report became an annual report. This was highlighted when the CIW report was completed and would now be reverting back to the six-monthly report as required. Members were also advised that emergency foster carers are available, although any additional available placements are always filled due to current demands. Members were assured that all CCBC foster carers are able to provide emergency care, as this may only be overnight or for a short period of time.

A Member sought clarification on the placements outside of the County Borough and whether children had 'run away' from any foster placements. Members were advised that placements outside of the County Borough were sometimes more appropriate for the child to be away from the area in which they live. Members were informed that 58 children were currently in foster care outside of the Borough, 8 of which were unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, who had been placed in areas with local connections. Members were advised that there were no significant issues with any children 'running away' from their foster placements and were assured that any issues involving disagreements were resolved with the children when they returned to their foster carer.

A Member queried how the support for foster carers compared with other local authorities. Members were advised that Caerphilly foster carers are supported very well, and CCBC work with other Gwent local authorities to ensure there is a consistent approach towards foster

carers. Members were also referred to Foster Wales, a national programme which monitors standards and promotes recruitment. Members were informed of the support network for foster carers, including the financial support which is linked to CCBC staff pay awards. Support information available for foster carers would be circulated to Members for their information following the meeting. The Member also queried how CCBC ensures that foster carers are providing a healthy lifestyle for the children. Members were advised that all foster carers have a link worker who provides support and information, and that all children in foster placements are allocated to a social worker. Healthy eating, lifestyle, exercise and education are all promoted, and the children are included in any decision-making process where this is possible and appropriate.

A Member congratulated officers on the positive CIW report and noted thanks to the foster carers. The Member queried how many children were in foster care under the age of 16, and how many children were leaving care. Members were advised that the Interim Corporate Director for Social Services meets with all foster carers annually, to discuss any issues and to recognise and acknowledge the work of the foster carers. Members were advised that there were currently 453 children in foster care, of which 24 were unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. Members were informed that approximately 130 were 16–18-year-olds, and the exact figures would be confirmed following the meeting.

A Member sought clarification on 'connected persons' referred to in the report. Members were advised that this could be a family member or a long-term family contact who are able to come forward to provide care for the child and to avoid them being placed in foster care and becoming a 'looked after' child. A connected person would still be subject to all the relevant assessment checks but would only be offering care to a specific child or sibling group and would not be available for any other foster placements. Members were also advised that CCBC would still be financially responsible for the child, and the relevant support would continue to be provided.

A Member queried the children's rights and entitlements, when they are 'looked after,' and Members were advised that each child has an independent advocate. The Member also clarified that when a child was in a foster placement, the whole family would benefit from free access to CCBC leisure activities. The Member also sought clarification on the number of 'looked after' children who progress to further/ higher education. Members were advised that where a child remains in education, CCBC would be responsible for the child until the age of 21, however some have been funded and supported beyond that age, where they have gone to university. The Member also clarified that foster carers are not always aware of the full information on each child. Members were advised that this may occur where emergency foster care is required, until such time that an appropriate foster placement can be determined. Members were also advised that CCBC had no areas of 'non-compliance' within the CIW report.

A Member noted their thanks for the CIW report and the positive responses to Members questions throughout the meeting. The Member suggested that this could be used in an advertising campaign for new CCBC foster carers and to show support to those existing foster carers.

A Member queried the current number of foster carers and whether the recent marketing campaign had been successful. Members were thanked for their positive feedback and informed that CCBC currently have 83 foster carers, offering 138 placements between them. Members were also advised that 5 new carers were currently going through the assessment process, and Members were referred to Foster Wales who were promoting foster care, including promotional advertising with CCBC.

The Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee noted the content of the Inspection Report.

The Chair thanked the Officer and wished to pass on her congratulations and thanks to all CCBC foster carers.

The meeting closed at 6.16 pm.

Approved as a correct record, subject to any amendments agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 22nd April 2025.

CHAIR