

SOCIAL & HEALTH CARE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
18 JUNE 2015

Minutes of the meeting of the Social & Health Care Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held in the Delyn Committee Room, County Hall, Mold on Thursday, 18 June 2015

PRESENT: **Councillor Carol Ellis (Chair)**

Councillors: Adele Davies-Cooke, Andy Dunbobbin, Veronica Gay, David Healey, Brian Lloyd, Mike Lowe, Hilary McGuill, Dave Mackie, Mike Reece and Ian Smith

APOLOGIES: Cabinet Member for Social Services, Chief Officer (Social Services)

Councillors: Hilary Isherwood, Carolyn Thomas and David Wisinger

CONTRIBUTORS: Senior Manager: Commissioning and Performance, Senior Manager Safeguarding: Lead Children, Disability Service Manager and Housing Regeneration & Strategy Manager

Complaints Officer (for minute number 14)

IN ATTENDANCE: Environment & Social Care Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator and Committee Officer

12. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)

Councillor Hilary McGuill declared a personal interest on Agenda Item 5 'Year End Chief Officer Performance Report' as her great nephew had been the recipient of a Disabled Facilities Grant.

The following Members declared a personal interest on Agenda Item 4 'Annual Report on the Social Services Representations and Complaints Procedure 2014-15':

Councillor Ian Smith - due to his stepson living in an assisted living placement (out of county) funded by the Council.

Councillor Andy Dunbobbin - as a kinship carer.

13. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 May 2015 had been circulated with the agenda.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

14. **ANNUAL REPORT ON THE SOCIAL SERVICES REPRESENTATIONS AND COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE 2014-15**

The Senior Manager: Commissioning and Performance introduced the annual report on compliments, representations and complaints received by Adult and Children Social Services for the year 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015. The information included a breakdown of complaints between service areas, and details of how these were resolved, timescales and outcomes. Whilst there was a statutory duty on councils to adopt their own complaints procedure, the approach taken by Flintshire also included a more independent and personal element by listening to the views of service users and to learn from them.

Social Services for Adults

The Complaints Officer gave an overview of statistics for Adult Social Services for which 56 complaints had been received out of a total of 4,182 service users supported during the period. As detailed in the report, the Disability Service Manager explained that the increase in complaints for the Learning Disability Service was due to the introduction of a toolkit assessment which calculated the number of respite nights for families. Some of the 80 individuals assessed had seen a reduction in their allocation, however it was noted that a series of independent review panels chaired by an external independent person had upheld every decision made by the Council through this assessment. It was reported that 95% of the complaints had been resolved within the required timescale for Stage 1 of the process; where this was not met, the complainant had been kept informed of progress.

On the Learning Disability Service, Councillor Hilary McGuill asked about the frequency of reviewing individuals' needs/situations. The Disability Service Manager explained that the statutory requirement was for a formal review to be undertaken annually, and that this would also be instigated for any reported changes in circumstances. She confirmed that the complaints for that service area were mainly due to the recent changes implemented on respite provision and would therefore expect to see a reduction next year.

The Senior Manager: Commissioning and Performance explained that the review formed part of the efficiency programme and that individuals were assessed against the revised framework.

In response to a question from Councillor Mike Lowe, the Disability Service Manager said that there had been no further challenge from the complainants to the outcomes of the assessment, following the independent panel reviews. However, she said that each case was considered individually and gave an example where respite allocation had been adjusted to support the situation of an individual.

The Complaints Officer highlighted the increase in the number of compliments received since 2013-14, but felt that the figure could be higher still due to reluctance by some officers to share this information. Councillor Dave Mackie stressed the importance of capturing as much as this data as possible and encouraged officers to pursue this. The Complaints Officer felt that the

majority of compliments were being recorded and that managers and staff were regularly reminded of the need to supply this data.

Councillor Andy Dunbobbin welcomed the increase in compliments relating to Mental Health and Substance Misuse and felt that there was now a higher level of awareness of mental health issues. Whilst recognising the challenges in recruiting staff for private homecare, he stressed the need for advertisements to include appropriate criteria and training to demonstrate capability. The Senior Manager said that the minimum job requirements were set by regulators and that the difficulties in attracting and retaining good quality permanent care staff was to be the focus of discussion by a Task Group. Responding to a query on the drop in the total number of service users since 2012-13, he said it was reasonable to expect some reduction as a result of some moves to reablement services, however the difference could be due to a change in accumulating figures and would clarify this in a separate response to the Committee. The Chair reinforced the need for clarity on reporting statistics to enable meaningful scrutinising.

Councillor McGuill was pleased to note the detail in the report on compliments. She raised concerns about the two complaints relating to dignity involving private registered providers and asked if records were kept showing whether those staff had undertaken the dignity training that was available. The Complaints Officer agreed to check this with the Contract Monitoring Team.

Councillor McGuill also raised concerns about the complaint relating to a lack of clarity and detail on care arrangements (Older People - Intake & Reablement). The Complaints Officer confirmed that officers had discussed the complaint with the family member and the care staff to ensure that this was resolved and understood by all. Whilst he could not give any guarantee that this would not be an issue in all cases, he gave assurance that these actions would help to reduce similar complaints in the future.

Following a query on actions taken to address the two proven allegations about care at privately registered homes, it was explained that these were now subject to the Protection of Vulnerable Adults (POVA) process which involved planning how to manage the risk and putting in place appropriate safeguards. The Complaints Officer agreed to provide a response to the Committee on what actions were being taken.

Reference was made to direct payments and changes in regulations in respect of pension and sickness benefits. The Disability Service Manager said that the Chief Officer (Social Services) had agreed that a percentage of the unused allocation of direct payments could be collected by the Council to support those individuals who were subject to financial hardship as a result of the legislative changes.

Following a question from Councillor Ian Smith, the Complaints Officer provided explanation on the complaint relating to the provision of meals from a privately registered domiciliary provider.

The Senior Manager explained that any concerns about service provision such as meals were subject to robust contract monitoring procedures to reassure

the Council and to prevent the escalation of complaints. He also referred to the approach taken by the Council to step beyond normal practice and discuss concerns with complainants to understand what was needed to improve services and to avoid the need for referrals to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.

Councillor Dunbobbin suggested that representatives of external care providers could be invited to a future meeting of the Committee to raise awareness of the level of scrutiny on performance. The Senior Manager explained that officers met regularly with the range of external providers working with the Council, and suggested that some Members could be involved with this. The Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator agreed, pointing out that a presentation had previously been given by a senior officer from a domiciliary care organisation. The Senior Manager suggested that the findings of Task Groups could be reported to the Committee, providing an opportunity for Members to scrutinise and challenge.

The Chair, along with Councillors Dunbobbin and McGuill, all expressed an interest in working with the Task Groups.

A query was raised by Councillor Veronica Gay about the monitoring of out of county care home services for Flintshire residents. The Senior Manager explained that arrangements were in place for an annual review of the individual's circumstances and progress involving a visit and contract monitoring checks. In addition, the care homes were inspected by the relevant regulator. For domiciliary care, a framework was in place to ensure that the provider was approved and was subject to contract monitoring arrangements to ensure that contractual obligations were being met.

The Senior Manager agreed to ascertain the number of Flintshire residents in out of county care homes and provide a response. The Chair asked that the response include the number of elderly mentally infirm.

The Disability Service Manager advised that out of county figures for individuals with learning disabilities were in the region of 40 and those with physical disabilities were less than ten.

Social Services for Children

The Complaints Officer reported a reduction in the number of complaints received since the previous year and an increase in the number of recorded compliments. He referred to positive links with the advocacy service which was promoted at various meetings and events. In providing background on the key issues, he highlighted the significant drop in complaints for Childcare Fieldwork and drew attention to work with managers to improve timescales for resolving complaints within the required timescale.

Councillor McGuill made reference to complaints on nine separate issues made by one foster care couple and asked whether sufficient training was available to avoid potential breakdowns in the fostering system. The Complaints Officer said that as part of lessons learned from the complaints, consideration was being given to refresher training for foster carers in addition to that provided at the approval stage, which would strengthen the process.

Councillor Dunbobbin paid tribute to the valuable assistance given by his social worker and by the child's social worker to help him in his capacity as a kinship carer. Whilst he had found access to training opportunities sometimes difficult due to a variety of reasons, he felt that options for different times would help attendance.

It was explained by the Senior Manager: Commissioning and Performance that foster carers had an annual review which identified any training requirements and helped to inform the training programme. He said that the provision of online training was being explored and that he would seek views on training at a forthcoming meeting with a foster carer group.

Councillor Dave Mackie said it was encouraging to see a reduction in the number of complaints given the significant increase in the number of referrals. Councillor Dunbobbin reflected on the Care & Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) report which had acknowledged the Council's positive efforts on corporate parenting.

The Senior Manager Safeguarding: Lead Children commented on initial verbal feedback from the recent CSSIW inspection which had commended staff within the service and the quality of relationships with children and families.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the report be noted;
- (b) That the recommendations/suggestions made by the Committee be taken forward; and
- (b) That officers be encouraged to share details on compliments received for their service areas.

15. YEAR END CHIEF OFFICER PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Senior Manager: Commissioning and Performance presented the 2014/15 year end service performance report produced by the Chief Officer (Social Services) for his portfolio. He gave a short presentation on performance, outlining work which had been undertaken to improve performance and areas where improvement was needed, as outlined within the report.

During explanation on the two operational risks identified in the wider risk register on the resilience of the independent sector, reference was made to the lack of available beds in the county, the increasing demand to support individuals with more complex needs and work to progress more extra care facilities as an alternative to residential care. As mentioned in the previous item, the challenges around recruiting quality nursing staff had resulted in heavy reliance on bank (agency) nurses and would be the subject of discussions with the health sector. Information was also provided on measures to improve sickness absence figures.

The Housing Regeneration & Strategy Manager explained that timescales for Disabled Facilities Grants had been greatly affected by staff recruitment and

retention issues in Housing over the past 12 months. However, it was hoped that this would be resolved through the restructuring of teams.

On the review of care plans during the year, the Senior Manager: Commissioning and Performance pointed out that the Council's achievement of 98% in the previous year had been the best performance across Wales, and was pleased to note that this level had been sustained for 2014/15.

The Senior Manager Safeguarding: Lead Children reported that all year end performance indicators for Children's Services had improved, apart from two relating to the completion of initial assessments where there was evidence of the child being seen/being seen alone by a social worker and re-referrals rates. She explained that the re-referrals rates were not straightforward as systems could capture multiple referrals relating to a single event and incorrectly reflect these as re-referrals, eg referrals from multiple agencies attending a single event would appear as re-referrals. Work has already commenced to review re-referrals and to revisit recording and reporting processes to provide a true reflection of re-referral rates. As an update, she reported that of the 35 indicators for last year, 20 had shown improvement, seven remained the same and eight decreased.

On corporate reporting (Section 3), Councillor McGuill pointed out the need for percentage bands on the graphs between Quarter 3 and Quarter 4 to be consistent to enable proper comparison. The Senior Manager: Commissioning and Performance said that this would be relayed to corporate colleagues who were responsible for producing the information.

Councillor Veronica Gay requested that the embedded document in Section 3 of the report be made available, if possible, and that any such documents be made accessible in future reports.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the report be noted;
- (b) That the comments/observations of the Committee are fed back to the Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee who are responsible for the overview and monitoring of performance, in particular the concerns around the 'red' risk areas which also relate to Health; and
- (c) That the comments on graph formatting and embedded documents be passed to the Performance team for future reference.

16. YEAR END IMPROVEMENT PLAN MONITORING REPORTS

The Senior Manager: Commissioning and Performance introduced the report for the Committee to note and consider elements of the 2014/15 Year End Improvement Plan Monitoring Report relevant to the Committee.

A short presentation was given on performance within each of the sub-priority areas, highlighting work which had been undertaken to improve performance and areas where improvement was needed, as outlined within each report.

Independent Living

On the average days taken to deliver a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG), the Senior Manager: Commissioning and Performance acknowledged that this was an area of particular concern for children/young people. He said that officers were looking at measures to reduce the timescales, explaining that the outturn for 2014/15 was due to the two cases involving some complex issues.

Councillor Hilary McGuill asked what was being done to help individuals in those cases, pointing out that the delays represented a long time in the lives of those children. She went on to stress the importance of 'future proofing' to plan for the years ahead where the child's needs could become more complex.

The Disability Service Manager pointed out that the indicator was measured from the start of the process through to completion sign-off and that did not reflect a range of interim measures implemented to help families awaiting the installation of equipment. In terms of forward planning, Occupational Therapists were responsible for co-ordinating a range of professional assistance which could be drawn upon, however it was not possible to accurately predict future needs in every case.

Councillor McGuill questioned the effectiveness of this approach and had previously raised with officers her concerns about the lack of forward planning for adaptations on a particular case. The Housing Regeneration & Strategy Manager was aware of the case and referred to it being highly complex in terms of the adaptations required. He went on to give assurance of forward planning as much as possible and said that the case highlighted would be reviewed again.

In response to further concerns raised by Councillor McGuill on improving timescales for DFG work for children/young people, the Disability Service Manager suggested that it may be helpful to share anonymised historic assessment data with the Committee to demonstrate the different elements of the process.

When asked how many DFGs had been completed for children/young people beyond 2014/15, the Housing Regeneration & Strategy Manager agreed to find out and respond to the Committee.

On DFGs, Councillor Dave Mackie suggested that it may be useful for future outturns to be accompanied by specific commentary including any feedback from the parent/carer, to satisfy Members of the support given and that perhaps a breakdown of the various elements of the process could help to identify where the problem was. He also pointed out inconsistencies in the 2013/14 baseline data and 2016/17 aspirational target when compared with the previous year's report.

In response to the concerns around DFGs, the Senior Manager: Commissioning and Performance suggested that he liaise with Internal Audit and request an assessment of the process to assure the Committee.

The Housing Regeneration & Strategy Manager reiterated that the outturns represented average figures, involving a range of actions, with complex issues including some matters outside the control of the Council. He remained confident that improvements could be made through the filling of posts in Housing.

Councillor Mike Lowe referred to the need for customers to be satisfied with the DFG work, irrespective of any delays which may be necessary.

In response to a query from Councillor Mackie, the Senior Manager Safeguarding: Lead Children provided explanation on referrals to the Integrated Family Support Service (IFSS) and the outturn which related to the 'distance travelled' by families from the start of intervention progressing along the travel spectrum. She confirmed that the missing data was available and should have been included. Councillor Mackie also highlighted missing data on the performance indicators relating to homelessness.

For Children's Services, Councillor Mackie highlighted the need for adequate forward planning to enable child in need plans to be reviewed within the required timescale. Whilst the Senior Manager felt there was room for improvement, she pointed out that the outturn had improved significantly since the previous year and was above the Welsh average. On the percentage of referrals that were re-referrals, she stated that a number of these could have been generated by one incident and classed as repeat referrals. She went on to provide details of the revised structure for Children's Services, due for consultation, which was aimed at creating more capacity for early intervention preventative work and should help to improve performance figures for next year.

Integrated Community Social and Health Services

Councillor Mackie spoke of concerns shared by the community health council on funding for the predicted demand of enhanced care services. The Chair said that Health Board representatives had attended a previous meeting where concerns had been raised about the lack of progression on enhanced care and locality working, and that this issue should be passed to the Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the report be noted;
- (b) That the areas highlighted as 'red' risks be referred to the Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny who are responsible for the overview and monitoring of performance; and
- (c) That the concerns around timescales for Disabled Facilities Grants for children/young people be referred to the Community & Enterprise Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

17. ROTA VISITS

No rota visits had been undertaken since last reported.

RESOLVED:

That the information be noted.

18. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Facilitator introduced a report to enable the Committee to consider the Forward Work Programme. Following agreement from the Committee, she agreed to schedule a date in July 2015 for a planning session to populate the Forward Work Programme.

In response to a comment by Councillor Ian Smith on meeting times, the Chair pointed out that meetings were split between mornings and afternoons to accommodate the preferences of various Members.

RESOLVED:

That the Forward Work Programme planning session be arranged for July 2015.

19. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE

There were no members of the press or public in attendance.

(The meeting started at 10.00 am and ended at 11.55 am)

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Chair