

SOCIAL & HEALTHCARE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Thursday 8 th December 2022
Report Subject	Social Care - Learning Disability Day and Work Opportunities Services Contract
Cabinet Member	Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Social Services and Wellbeing
Report Author	Chief Officer (Social Services)
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides an update on the Learning Disability Day and Work Opportunities Services and the current contractual situation with a partner organisation, Hft, who are contracted to deliver these services.

Following a light-touch procurement exercise, the service contract to deliver the service was awarded to Hft, a national charity and specialist learning disability service provider. The current contract is effective from 1st February 2018 for an initial five year period running until 31st January 2023 with an option to extend for a further two years until 31st January 2025. The services subject to contract were previously delivered by the in-house Learning Disability service. Consequently as part of the contract award, a number of Flintshire County Council staff transferred to Hft as per the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations (TUPE) on the service start date.

The contract covers three primary service elements – work opportunities, supported employment and day services though the overall service offering has evolved significantly since the inception of the contract. There have been substantial changes in some of the practical aspects of the service delivery, for example the relocation of the day centre from the former Glanrafon site to the newly constructed day centre, named Hwb Cyfle, in June 2019.

Hft are a valued partner organisation to the local authority and have been supportive and innovative throughout the relationship to date. They have adapted to the substantial challenges of operating throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, modifying their service delivery model as required according to prevailing restrictions to ensure that individuals supported continued to receive services.

The provider has continued to evolve their local provision and examine innovative ways of delivering services. From 1st July 2022, Hft assumed operational management of Growing Places, a mental health work opportunities support service. They are also a partner organisation in the delivery of Project SEARCH in Flintshire, an internship programme for adults with learning disabilities and autism. The first scheme in the UK for adults over the age of twenty five was launched earlier this year in the county.

This report provides an update on the progress of the partnership to date and focusses on the potential for activating the two year extension clause in the current contract.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	That the Committee notes the progress made through the partnership with Hft and supports extending the contract as per the extension clause.
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REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE PROGRESS TO DATE FOR THE SOCIAL SERVICES LEARNING DISABILITY PARTNERSHIP WITH HFT.
1.01	<p>The Learning Disability Day and Work Opportunities service provides meaningful activities across several day centre and work environments. The service also provides respite for people that use services, and for their families and carers. The service supports people to learn new skills, prepare for paid and voluntary employment, promotes independence and the development of social networks.</p> <p>The partnership provides a sustainable service model that delivers positive outcomes for the individuals supported at the services. The current contract incorporates a requirement for Hft to deliver Social Value as part of their service offering.</p> <p>The new day centre and community facility in Queensferry, Hwb Cyfle, which opened in June 2019 has provided a modern and accessible environment to facilitate effective service delivery. Day and work opportunities services are also delivered across several other sites within Flintshire and the Supported Employment team who are based at Hwb Dyffryn in Greenfield support in excess of ninety individuals at supported work placements across the county, in addition to two cohorts of interns enrolled on current Project SEARCH programmes.</p>
1.02	Hft are a nationwide, charitable organisation who provide person-centred support to individuals with learning disabilities. The organisation supports around 2,200 individuals with learning disabilities across England and Wales.

	<p>As part of the relationship with the local authority, Hft works in close partnership with the individuals they support, and other stakeholders such as families, carers and involved professionals to develop effective services. Hft deploy person-centred models to support people with learning disabilities in meaningful activities and relationships and promote independence and inclusion.</p>
1.03	<p>The governance and contract monitoring arrangements for the current contract are principally managed through the Partnership Board, which convene quarterly. The Partnership Board reviews the service delivery against the service specification as stated in the contract (via quarterly service reports prepared by the service provider), monitors financial performance against the allocated service budget and manages key risks. The Board also considers any service development proposals and business plans.</p> <p>The Partnership Board includes representation from the local authority, including the Cabinet Member for Social Services, Chief Officer, Service, Commissioning and Finance leads. The board is represented by senior directors, managers and finance partners from Hft and trade union personnel.</p> <p>To promote inclusion and diversity with regards to representation on the board, it is also anticipated that the newly recruited Hft Supported Employment Advocate will be joining the board from 2023 onwards. There are also operational and finance sub-groups which support partnership working and manage operational issues outside of the quarterly board meetings.</p>
1.04	<p>The current contract with Hft is a five year contract, effective from 1st February 2018 running until 31st January 2023 with an option to extend for a further two years until 31st January 2025.</p>
1.05	<p>Hft are a valued partner organisation to the local authority and have been supportive and innovative throughout the relationship to date. Since the commencement of the contract, Hft have reviewed and evolved their delivery model across the local services. As a consequence of this, the overall service offering now encompasses several new and additional service elements that didn't comprise part of the original contract and these are examined in more detail in section 1.06.</p> <p>The service was also very responsive in adapting to the substantial challenges of operating throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. Service delivery models were amended as necessary to ensure service continuity for the individuals supported.</p>
1.06	<p>Hwb Cyfle Day Centre - The move to Hwb Cyfle precipitated several service model changes and initiatives. Prior to the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, individuals accessing services at Hwb Cwfle were supported to access activities within the wider building rather than remaining in one area of the site. This promoted flexibility and choice for the individuals supported and also allowed staff to develop new skills and foster broader support relationships across the service setting.</p>

	<p>It should be acknowledged that the effects and restrictions as a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic have affected this service dynamic. Support has, and continues to be delivered via ‘support bubbles’ according to prevailing guidelines and/or risk mitigation measures.</p> <p>Throughout the duration of the contract to date, the service has continued to foster wider relationships within the community. External organisations and community groups are encouraged to attend the day centre and facilitate and take part in a range of activities.</p>
1.07	<p><u>Work Opportunities and Supported Employment Services</u></p> <p><u>Supported Employment service</u> - The former Job Coach service has evolved into a supported employment service model in alignment with Hft’s service model in other areas in which they operate. Hft have been able to exploit their experience of facilitating similar projects in other service areas across their nationwide portfolio and sharing best practice to further this development. The quarterly Operational Report from Hft issued in October 2022 indicated that the service was supporting 92 individuals.</p> <p><u>Project SEARCH</u> - Hft have demonstrated innovation in their service provision and have been integral to the success of Project SEARCH, an international transition to work programme for individuals with learning disabilities and autism within Flintshire. Since the inception of Flintshire’s first Project SEARCH programme, a significant proportion of the former interns have progressed to paid employment.</p> <p>Additionally, the first Project SEARCH programme for individuals aged over-25 in the UK was recently launched in Flintshire in conjunction with ClwydAlyn Housing, representing a significant expansion in the scope of the project.</p> <p><u>Work Opportunities services</u> - The Work Opportunities service has evolved since the contract commenced in 2018 with some former sites being relinquished and the development of a new service, Hwb Dyffryn, based at Greenfield Business Park.</p> <p>The Tri Ffordd horticultural service continues to operate out of its current base in Bretton though it is anticipated that the service will relocate to expand and further develop the service offering. Developmental work has been undertaken regarding a potential move and following the results of a feasibility study issued in September 2021, approval to relocate to a new development in Mold was granted £2.7M funding to support the new development has been allocated in the Council Capital Programme 2022/23-2024/25.</p> <p>The project to relocate the service is progressing according to the project plan and it is envisaged that the new development will be operational in spring 2024. Hft have been involved in the developmental and conceptual stages offering valuable input from an operational perspective both with the initial feasibility study and the progression of the current project programme.</p> <p>The Work Opportunities service also absorbed the Growing Places provision into their portfolio in July 2022, which represented an expansion of the scope of the support provided to incorporate a mental health support</p>

	<p>service. The operational running of the provision is reported to be successful and Hft are promoting integration between the Growing Places and Tri Ffordd services.</p> <p>The catering establishment based at Rowley's Drive in Shotton was reopened in June 2022 following a programme of refurbishment and has been renamed Caffi Dai. There has been a change in recent recruitment to the service which is reflecting a more commercially driven focus at the site.</p>
1.08	<p><u>Additional Service Developments</u></p> <p>As the overall service offering has evolved over the life of the contract to date, new service initiatives have been created as some of the services that were in situ at the contract outset have been decommissioned and/or relocated. Hft now facilitate a service entitled Luv2meetU which is a friendship and relationship service for adults with learning disabilities and/or autism. The delivery model for this service has recently been reconfigured so that it is now a paid membership service and is potentially financially self-sustaining moving forward.</p> <p>Further developments include Nature Force, a group that undertakes outdoor activities with an environmental perspective and also operates allotments. The service has also recently employed a former Project SEARCH intern as a Supported Employment Advocate who will assist with marketing, networking and liaising with employers and engaging with stakeholders to inform service development.</p>
1.09	<p><u>Partnership Working</u></p> <p>Hft have throughout the duration of the contract to date, developed successful partnerships in order to provide new opportunities for the individuals who access their services.</p> <p>Project SEARCH is operated in conjunction with several partner agencies and Hft have fostered positive working relationships with the other involved agencies. In addition to the local authority, this includes the host employers, ClwydAlyn Housing and GXO Logistics, and also the North Wales learning disability transformation programme.</p> <p>Hft have also been involved in a local pilot scheme to promote employment opportunities for disabled people. This initiative is being coordinated in partnership with agencies including Deeside Business Forum, Coleg Cambria and the local authority.</p> <p>The service is also proactive in engaging with external organisations which provide a range of activities, incentives to promote healthy living and training opportunities for individuals accessing the services. Recent examples of this include First Aid and Fire Safety training delivered at one of the work opportunities sites and also Hate Crime awareness sessions delivered by the North Wales police.</p> <p>Hft have worked in partnership with a local charity and several organisations to refurbish Caffi Dai which was relaunched in June 2022. A</p>

	<p>similar programme of refurbishment is planned for another of the work opportunities sites, Abbey Upcycling in early 2023. Similarly, it is anticipated that the refurbishment will utilise existing partnerships and will not necessitate additional funding from the local authority to be achieved.</p>
1.10	<p>Fundraising Due to their registered charitable status, Hft is able to raise funding in addition to the funding allocated via the block contract with the local authority. The supplementary revenue is able to facilitate service innovation to complement the core services provided subject to the contract and offset some of the additional costs of expanding the service offering.</p> <p>Additionally, the organisation has dedicated staff resource and expertise with respect to fundraising and accessing relevant sources of grant funding. The organisation has been successful with applications to the Foundational Economy Challenge Fund which has provided funding for the Luv2meetU service and also contributed towards the costs of an Employability Tutor recruited to support the work of the Project SEARCH initiative in Flintshire.</p> <p>The service is also facilitating a theatre group run by a qualified drama coach. The group is currently funded by monies sourced from fundraising and at no additional cost to the local authority.</p>

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	<p>Financial progress throughout the duration of the contract has been monitored via the Partnership Board and finance meetings. The contract has been amended since it commenced to reflect changes to the maintenance and catering elements.</p> <p>The service has continued to deliver efficiencies as per the original plan.</p>
2.02	<p>As per all social care contracts, if the option to extend the contract is granted, an annual uplift based upon the Local Government pay award for staff who transferred under TUPE regulations and the pay award as directed by the provider for none-TUPE staff would need to be considered alongside any other inflationary increase in running costs.</p>

3.00	IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT
3.01	<p>Operational risks are managed by the operational and finance sub-groups, escalating to the Partnership Board for support and mitigation as required.</p> <p>The Partnership Board manage all service risks, including any conditions agreed as part of the service contract agreement.</p>

4.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED/CARRIED OUT
4.01	The option to extend the contract has been discussed at Partnership Board and also the Social Services Programme Board held on 14 th November 2022.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	None.

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	None.

7.00	CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS
7.01	<p>Contact Officer: Dawn Holt Telephone: 01352 702128 E-mail: dawn.holt@flintshire.gov.uk</p>

8.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
8.01	<p>Autism: Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) usually referred to as autism, a lifelong developmental disability affecting how individuals communicate and interact. Autistic individuals may experience difficulties in social communication.</p> <p>Foundational Economy Challenge Fund: The Foundational Economy Challenge Fund is a Welsh Government initiative to support experimental projects with a key aim of appraising the success of the interventions which best support the foundational economy.</p> <p>Project SEARCH: A national supported internship programme for individuals with learning disabilities and/or autism spectrum conditions. The programme involves partnership working across the public, private and voluntary sectors to create supported employment internships.</p> <p>Transfer of Undertakings Protection of Employment Regulations (TUPE): Regulations that apply to employees and employers when a business transfer or service provision transfer is undertaken.</p>