

SOCIAL & HEALTH CARE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
19 SEPTEMBER 2013

Minutes of the meeting of the Social & Health Care Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held at Delyn Committee Room, County Hall, Mold CH7 6NA on Thursday, 19 September 2013

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

Councillors: Marion Bateman, Andy Dunbobbin, Veronica Gay, Brian Lloyd, Mike Lowe, Hilary McGuill, Dave Mackie, Ian Smith and David Wisinger

SUBSTITUTES: Councillors: Ian Dunbar (for Cindy Hinds) and Paul Shotton (for Peter Curtis)

APOLOGIES: Councillors: Hilary Isherwood and Stella Jones

CONTRIBUTORS: Cabinet Member for Social Services, Director of Community Services and Head of Adult Services

Service Manager - Disability and Contracts Manager (for minute number 19)

Service Manager, Resources (for minute number 21)

Performance Team Leader (for minute number 22)

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

17. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)

Councillors H.J. McGuill and D.I. Mackie both declared personal interests in relation to Agenda Item 5 as they were members of the Community Health Council. Councillor A.C. Dunbobbin declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 6 (Development of a National Adoption Service for Wales) as he was a kinship carer.

18. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 July 2013 had been circulated with the agenda. Responses to queries previously raised on Adult Safeguarding and Rota Visits Activity were circulated to the Committee.

Accuracy

Minute 13: Welsh Ambulance Service - the Chair pointed out that Ms. Dyson of the Welsh Ambulance Service had agreed with her comment on the impact on the service arising from the closure of community hospitals. Ms. Dyson had said that there would be an increased pressure on ambulance waiting times due to visits made to patients' homes who could have been in community hospital beds.

Matters Arising

Minute 13: Welsh Ambulance Service - Having spoken with Ms. Dyson outside the meeting about arrangements for despatching an appropriate type of vehicle to a patient's home, Councillor M. Bateman had suggested to Ms. Dyson that checks be carried out to ensure this was standard practice.

On resolutions (b) and (c) from this item, the Facilitator advised that the outstanding information would be circulated to the Committee once it became available.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That subject to one amendment, the minutes be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair; and
- (b) That the outstanding information on minute 13 be circulated to the Committee, when available.

19. LEARNING DISABILITY COMMISSIONING PLAN

The Head of Adult Services introduced a report detailing plans for the provision of accommodation and support to persons with a learning disability in Flintshire over the next five years.

In providing an overview of the report, he highlighted the key points in the summary and main strategy document which indicated current provision in Flintshire and the anticipated five year model. He summarised the vision for a range of accommodation options to enable people to be as independent as possible with 'just enough support' to promote their wellbeing and ensure their safety. The strategy also aimed to increase the number of people using direct payments/Citizen Directed Support (CDS). In conclusion, the strategy aimed to give people greater choice on independent living, where needed, in light of the increasing population of people with learning disabilities.

Councillor A.I. Dunbar asked if there was sufficient housing and support available for people who wished to move on. He referred to people with learning disabilities who currently lived with family members and said that enabling some to live independently was a major issue requiring adequate support. The Head of Adult Services explained that additional housing options, such as 12 flats in Mold, were being developed for this client group over the coming year and future plans for extra care provision would include options for those with learning disabilities. It was accepted that individual support planning was needed to cater for varying needs and the Council would continue to support those who were living with people with learning disabilities. An appropriate measured process was in place to help individuals achieve more independent living if they wished. Options for overnight care provision could involve a 'keyring' model of support or use of the Telecare service, however a particular model would not be imposed on any individual.

Councillor M. Bateman asked about the range of need and percentages of the client group. The Service Manager (Disabilities) explained that learning

disabilities spanned a wide range of needs and gave examples where high and low levels of support were currently being utilised. She explained that although there was a lower percentage of people with profound and multiple learning disabilities in the county, the number in this particular client group was consistently higher than in other North Wales Authorities. Officers worked with the Housing section and Accommodation Group to create opportunities for housing needs and could plan transition from an early age via Children's Services through to adult lives. When asked about the potential for a breakdown of a situation, the Service Manager said that officers would opt to change the level of support accordingly, as opposed to removing the person from their situation. She added that individuals would have their own tenancy agreements and therefore the same rights would apply.

Councillor D. Wisinger sought information on the number of people with learning disabilities who may need to move to a smaller property as a result of the 'bedroom tax' and the financial impact of such moves. The Contracts Manager advised that she had recently spoken with the manager of the Receivership Team, who were responsible for supporting individuals to manage their finances in their tenancies, and that no-one in this client group had been identified as being financially challenged by the new approach.

The Chair reminded Members that there was an opportunity to raise such issues at a workshop on Welfare Reform scheduled for 8 November 2013. The Director of Community Services commented that there had been an impact from welfare reforms and would ask Paul Neave to provide the latest information for the workshop. The Facilitator added that Paul Neave and a representative from the Department of Work & Pensions would be in attendance at the workshop.

Councillor D.I. Mackie felt that the flow of the report could have been greatly improved and questioned the range of choice available to those listed in the strategy. The Contracts Manager explained that the layout of the report followed national guidance set by the Welsh Government (WG) and that a summary had been provided to show the needs analysis of this particular client group. Whilst some people were in supported living arrangements in Flintshire, some were in residential homes (mainly out of county) due to specific individual reasons and the aim was to have an extensive range of accommodation available in Flintshire. The figures in the table showed that a large number of people were in shared accommodation in three-bedroom models within Flintshire, although there were challenges in this matching-up process. The assessment of those in historic complex out of county placements to potentially move to nearby provision was part of work being undertaken by the North Wales Commissioning Hub.

Whilst thanking officers for the informative report, Councillor W.P. Shotton sought further details on CDS and asked if there was adequate provision at extra care facilities for the increasing number of people with moderate to severe learning difficulties aged 65 and over. He referred to the example shown in Box 3 of the strategy where a man with learning disabilities had moved on from his parents' home to supported accommodation and said that in cases such as this, consideration should also be given to any support needed for the parents in going forward.

The Service Manager explained that a number of authorities, including Flintshire, had extended the concept whereby monies were allocated to individuals to pay for support or equipment to help them achieve what was important to them. She gave an example where a one-off purchase by an individual with a physical disability had proved an effective way of meeting needs in a cost-effective way and said that this initiative could be broadened to help those with learning disabilities. The Head of Adult Services said that provision for those with learning disabilities would be built into future extra care accommodation to meet needs. He referred to the increasing number of people with Dementia and the facilities available at Llys Jasmine. Officers would continue to work with young people who wished to remain with their parents with access to direct payments.

Councillor H.J. McGuill raised concerns about responsibility for the sexual health of people with learning disabilities in shared accommodation. The Service Manager advised that the Learning Disabilities Nurse service worked alongside Social Workers to provide specialist support where a need was identified. Work was also carried out with young people via group talks and general health support assistance could be provided by trained support staff. In response to a further query, the Service Manager said that individuals with a tested mental capacity would assume responsibility themselves, otherwise responsibility would be established and agreed beforehand. In addition, safeguarding procedures were in place for those harmed or abused.

Whilst acknowledging the need for changes, the Chair spoke about the challenges faced by some people in adjusting to a move from a structured care package to reduced arrangements and was concerned about protection for those for whom 'just enough' care was not sufficient. She referred to the target for increased levels of access to direct payments/CDS and said that many people would not have the capacity to manage choice of care packages which may require the involvement of Social Workers.

The Head of Adult Services commented on the smooth transition from children's services to adults and confirmed that appropriate safeguards were in place for those currently within the service through regular reviews by specialist nurses and social workers to identify any problems and re-assess care levels. In response to comments about a case reported in press coverage from another area, the Contracts Manager spoke about the close working relationship with the Care & Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) and said that information on organisations going into administration would be shared.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Committee support the implementation of the Learning Disabilities Commissioning Strategy following final consultation and informing sessions; and
- (b) That the Director of Community Services request current information on the impact of welfare reforms for discussion at the workshop on 8 November 2013.

20. ADULTS SAFEGUARDING REGIONAL PROPOSAL

The Head of Adult Services introduced a report providing information on future proposed Regional Safeguarding structures in response to requirements in the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Bill and Sustainable Social Services: A Framework for Action. In line with Part 7 of the Bill, the development of structures had resulted in four possible options, the preferred option being a two-tier approach for a North Wales Adult Safeguarding Board. The reasons for favouring this option were outlined in the report and Members were advised that the proposal was also being submitted to the relevant Overview & Scrutiny Committees of the other North Wales authorities.

In response to comments made by Councillor A.I. Dunbar on the need to separate safeguarding practice of children and adults, the Director of Community Services said that there were differing views on this and that there was a commitment to ensure that both were as safe, secure and responsive as possible. He added that the proposal was to keep the two areas separate on an interim basis with potential learning on both sides.

Councillor D.I. Mackie asked for more detail on the engagement of elected Members which was mentioned in the appendix to the report. The Director explained that this was a North Wales document and referred to the appropriate Member role on safeguarding boards.

The Chair spoke about the need to ensure political involvement and accountability and said that as a former Executive Member of Children's and Adult's Services, she had pursued a place on the Local Safeguarding Children's Board in that capacity.

The Cabinet Member for Social Services added that she was the elected Member representative on both Children's and Adult's safeguarding boards, along with peers from other authorities.

Following concerns raised by Councillor M. Bateman on the preferred option, the Head of Adult Services said that retaining a local structure helped to maintain a level of control and that joint meetings could help to reduce bureaucracy.

In response to queries raised by Councillor A.C. Dunbobbin on the size of bid made to the Regional Collaboration Fund and how much existing regional capacity would be used, the Director agreed to provide this information. He added that the bid was a 5-figure sum annually for three years to be used to strengthen workforce elements of safeguarding.

Councillor W.P. Shotton commented on the two-tiered option strengthening the collaboration agenda in North Wales and said that the safeguarding of children was paramount and needed robust arrangements in light of a recent national case.

Officers noted Councillor V. Gay's request for supporting documents from the regional North Wales workshop at the start of the year to be shared with the Committee.

On being put to the vote, resolution (a) was carried with seven for, two against and two abstentions. Councillor I. Smith wished it to be recorded that he had abstained from voting.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Committee support this proposed regional model to change the current arrangements for adult safeguarding across North Wales implementing the preferred option, a two-tiered North Wales Adult Safeguarding Board;
- (b) That further detail be provided to the Committee on the financial implications; and
- (c) That supporting documents from the regional North Wales workshop held on 25 January 2013 be circulated to the Committee.

21. DEVELOPMENT OF A NATIONAL ADOPTION SERVICE FOR WALES

The Director of Community Services introduced a report to seek views on the plan to establish a National Adoption Service for Wales, supported by regional adoption collaboratives and the proposal for Wrexham to continue to act as the lead authority for the North Wales Adoption Service (NWAS). The Chair pointed out that as the recommendations had already been approved by Cabinet, the Committee was being requested to note the report.

Councillor W.P. Shotton welcomed the proposals and commented on the value of adoptive parents, more of whom were in great demand. In response to a query on meetings of the North Wales Heads of Children's Services, the Service Manager, Resources clarified that Wrexham was the host authority for all six North Wales authorities and would continue to hold quarterly meetings of the NWAS Board.

Councillor H.J. McGuill commented on good adoption rates in the county historically and whilst accepting the benefits of providing a single point of contact for anyone seeking information about adoption, questioned whether the proposals would add value in speeding up the process and improving outcomes for children. The Director of Community Services said that there was a Ministerial expectation to improve standards of adoption with the national agreement of a single point of contact and monitoring of performance data. The aim was to maintain good performance in Flintshire with the potential for further improvement through the sharing of good practice across authorities.

The Service Manager, Resources stated that children in Flintshire were receiving a good quality service with positive outcomes and referred to the important roles carried out by adopters and kinship carers along with the complex matching-up process. He drew attention to the 'current situation' statistics at the end of March 2013 within the report and gave examples of updated information which would be circulated separately together with explanatory narrative. The aim of the NWAS was to speed up the adoption process to improve outcomes for all involved. In response to comments on Flintshire's high performance in recent

years compared with other authorities, there was an average eight month processing time for adopters and between 8-12 months for children awaiting adoption.

The Chair remarked on a judge's comments reported in the national press which suggested that the best place for a child was to remain with the birth parents. The Service Manager, Resources explained that these comments were in favour of slowing down the process to ensure that outcomes were in the best interests of the child in what was a crucial life-changing decision. Following remarks made by Councillor McGuill on determining outcomes of failed adoptions, he said that the effects of adoption could take a lifetime to understand. The range of support services available to those affected by adoption had never been so extensive compared to previous generations. The Director added that the performance of NWAS would continue to be reported over time.

Councillor A.I. Dunbar hoped that the single point of contact would enable interested parties to receive all the necessary information and improve the assessment process.

The Service Manager, Resources believed that the NWAS would give greater scrutiny into how targets were being met. The Director echoed this and said that the single point of contact would assist with consistency of information and that links to regional networks would help to improve the service.

Councillor D.I. Mackie thanked officers for their responses but expressed concern about a lack of Member involvement if issues needed to be raised on such a regional project. The Service Manager, Resources said that such representations should be made to the Minister. However, it was his view that an effective regional working system was in place and gave assurance that Members were able to raise issues with him, in his operational role, which he would then pass on to the Board.

In response to comments from Councillor M. Lowe on changes to the funding formula, it was reported that the NWAS was subject to independent review and that a working group reporting to the Board was currently giving consideration to a possible review of the formula.

Officers noted Councillor V. Gay's request that future reports include important evaluation information on actions and costings rather than adding as embedded documents.

The Chair reiterated her comments from the start of the item and asked that the Committee note the report.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the contents of the report be noted;
- (b) That the Service Manager, Resources provide the summary report of updated statistical information to the Committee.

22. PERFORMANCE REPORTING

The Performance Team Leader presented a report to provide an update on the streamlined and corporate approach to performance reporting that was being introduced. She explained that the new arrangements had been introduced following the adoption of the Improvement Plan for 2013/14 to which it was intended the new three year Outcome Agreement would be aligned. Reporting and monitoring arrangements were shown in the report including a mapping document which detailed the sub-priorities to be reported to each of the Overview & Scrutiny Committees.

In response to a question from Councillor W.P. Shotton on flexibility of the Outcome Agreement, it was confirmed that the process would be re-negotiated year on year to take account of changes in Priorities.

Councillor A.I. Dunbar referred to the Accountability Mapping and said that sub-Priorities such as Business Sector Growth in Deeside and Town & Rural Regeneration could be viewed as priorities in their own right. The Performance Team Leader confirmed that the new approach to reporting would help to ensure that those sub-priorities which had an 'in-year' focus would be reported quarterly for greater concentration on their delivery.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee support the new approach to performance reporting.

23. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Environment and Social Care Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator introduced a report to enable the Committee to consider the Forward Work Programme, which had been formulated at the workshop held in July 2013. In providing an overview of current items, she highlighted the following:

- Members were requested to contact Sue Dolman in Community Services to confirm their attendance at the workshop on Double Click as a Social Enterprise on 2 October 2013;
- the Social Services Improvement Agency report due to be considered at this meeting had been deferred to 24 October 2013;
- the meeting scheduled for 28 November had been moved to 25 November 2013 at 1pm;
- the date for the Committee's budget consultation meeting was confirmed for 5 December 2013 at 10am. All Members would receive written confirmation of all Overview & Scrutiny budget consultation meeting dates; and
- a Task and Finish Group would be established for a one-off session to consider the Annual Council Reporting Framework (ACRF).

The Director of Community Services advised the Committee of the impending retirement of Judy Evans, who had worked for the Council for

20 years. The Chair asked that the Facilitator pass on the best wishes of the Committee.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Forward Work Programme be updated accordingly; and
- (b) That the Facilitator act on behalf of the Committee in passing on best wishes to Judy Evans on her retirement.

24. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE

There was one member of the press in attendance.

(The meeting started at 3.00 pm and ended at 5.05 pm)

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Chairman