

SOCIAL & HEALTH CARE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
4 MARCH 2021

Minutes of the meeting of the Social & Health Care Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held at Remote Meeting on Thursday, 4 March 2021.

PRESENT: Councillor Hilary McGuill (Chair)

Councillors: Mike Allport, Marion Bateman, Paul Cunningham, Jean Davies, Carol Ellis, Gladys Healey, Cindy Hinds, Mike Lowe, Dave Mackie, Michelle Perfect and David Wisinger

CONTRIBUTORS: Councillor Christine Jones (Cabinet Member for Social Services); Chief Officer (Social Services); Senior Manager – Integrated Services and Lead Adults; Senior Manager – Children and Workforce; Senior Manager - Safeguarding and Commissioning, Wellbeing and Partnership Lead Officer, and Resources Service Manager

IN ATTENDANCE: Overview & Scrutiny Facilitators and Democratic Services Support Officer.

31. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)

None were received.

32. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 January 2021 were submitted.

Accuracy

Page 7: Councillor Dave Mackie referred to a typographical error in the third paragraph and said the word “crease” should read “increase”.

The minutes were moved by Councillor Paul Cunningham and seconded by Councillor Jean Davies.

RESOLVED:

That subject to the above amendment, the minutes be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

33. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME AND ACTION TRACKING

The Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator presented the current Forward Work Programme. She referred to the items for consideration at the next and future meetings of the Committee. She drew attention to an All Member Seminar to discuss Out of County Placements to be held on 22 March at 2.00 pm, and to the further items to be scheduled on the FWP from September 2021.

The Facilitator referred to the action tracking report which was appended to the report. She advised that a response was still awaited from the Welsh Government to the joint letter sent from the Chair of Social & Health Care and Chair of Education, Youth and Culture Overview & Scrutiny Committees concerning home schooling. She reported that all actions had been completed and gave an update on progress on the Committee's request for a report on disability discrimination to be submitted for consideration to a future meeting. She invited members to raise any items they wished to be included on the forward work programme.

The Chair asked that an item on hospital meals service be scheduled.

In response to a question from Councillor Paul Cunningham, the Chief Officer (Social Services) confirmed that a Member had been nominated to represent the Council on the North Wales Adoption Service.

The recommendations in the report were moved by Councillor Gladys Healey and seconded by Councillor Mike Lowe.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Forward Work Programme be noted;
- (b) That the Facilitator, in consultation with the Chair of the Committee be authorised to vary the Forward Work Programme between meetings, as the need arises; and
- (c) That the Committee notes the progress made in completing the outstanding actions.

34. MOCKINGBIRD – UPDATE ON THE PROGRAMME

The Senior Manager – Children and Workforce introduced a report to provide an overview of the implementation of Mockingbird. He commented on the Council's ambition to support looked after children locally and provide an effective fostering service for children and foster carers. He provided background information and invited Steph Martin, Mockingbird Liaison Officer, to provide an update on the Mockingbird Fostering Project.

The Liaison Officer advised that in January 2021 the Council launched its first Mockingbird constellation in Flintshire (the name given to each group comprising between 6-10 fostering families supported by one experienced foster carer or Hub carer). She reported on the positive progress made and said children within the groups were developing good relationships and accessing community programmes. A second constellation was launched in February 2021 which has 5 satellite families, 8 looked after children, 10 birth children and 2 children in 'When I'm ready'. She commented on how the service was being expanded through the encouragement and support provided by experienced foster carers to new foster carers. The Council's ambition was for a further Mockingbird constellation in 2021 along with an intensive campaign to recruit more general foster carers.

The Liaison Officer commented on the impact that the COVID 19 pandemic had on the Mockingbird project and the fostering community but said it had remained on track for progression and implementation. Referring to the Welsh Government's loan to establish innovative social programmes she advised that following consultation the WG had agreed to extend the loan repayment period due to ongoing COVID restrictions. The Liaison Officer also explained that as part of the loan arrangement it had been agreed to delay the external evaluation phase of Mockingbird in Flintshire by 12 months to enable the evaluation to cover a period when the project was fully operational.

Members commented on the high standard of the report and spoke in support of the Project and congratulated officers on their work.

In response to a comment from the Chair the Liaison Officer explained the planning and activities to maintain relationships for sibling groups within constellations.

Councillor Carol Ellis asked if some scenarios could be provided in the future to demonstrate how the Mockingbird programme was improving the foster care service.

The recommendations in the report were moved by Councillor Paul Cunningham and seconded by Councillor Gladys Healey.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Committee notes the implementation of constellation one and two and that number three is set for Autumn 2021; and
- (b) That the effectiveness of the model in terms of a social and cost benefit analysis be noted.

35. AROSFA UPDATE

The Senior Manager – Children and Workforce introduced a report to provide an update on the Arosfa refurbishment. He provided background information and explained that an unused wing of the building had been refurbished to provide two additional bed spaces. He reported that the building work was completed and work on the internal furnishings in progress. Action for Children are working to extend staff capacity and secure the requisite approval from CIW to expand the service. He advised that an assessment was currently being undertaken to identify the children/families that would most benefit from the provision and associated support model. The Resources Service Manager commented that the work undertaken was of a high standard and designed to meet the complex needs of the children who used the service.

In response to a question by Councillor Paul Cunningham on out of county placements, the Senior Manager explained that timely and appropriate support could help families stay together and reduce the risk of breakdown. The Service was actively seeking to identify those families where such support would help avoid out of county placements.

The recommendation in the report was moved by Councillor Mike Lowe and seconded by Councillor Jean Davies.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee notes the refurbishment that has been achieved and supports progress to the next phase of service modelling and the opening of the provision, once the appropriate regulatory conditions have been met.

36. NORTH WALES DEMENTIA STRATEGY AND THE FLINTSHIRE LOCAL STRATEGY

The Cabinet Member for Social Services introduced a report to give an update on the development of a strategy for care and support services for people living with dementia in Flintshire. She provided an overview of the support and numerous activities carried out in Flintshire to improve the lives of people living with dementia and their carers. She also reported on the collaborative work, awareness raising, and training, that the Council undertook with local organisations, businesses, churches, schools, care and nursing homes. The Cabinet Member referred to the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic and said that new and innovative ways of working and maintaining contact had been embraced to ensure people and their carers were not isolated and continued to be involved and received care and support..

The Senior Manager Integrated Services and Lead Adults made reference to the regional dementia strategy and Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB) action plan and said it was intended to incorporate some elements of those strategies into the local action plan for Flintshire. She reported that the dementia action plan funding which was part of the Integrated Care Fund programme would continue. She introduced the Wellbeing and Partnership Lead Officer who presented the report.

The Wellbeing and Partnership Lead Officer commented on the future and priorities going forward, commencement of new projects and ideas, opportunity for a regional strategy and sharing of best practice with other authorities. He said the Council was committed to having its own dementia strategy for Flintshire and said that the priorities would be regularly reviewed and updated and set by Social & Health Care professionals, people with experience of dementia, and community groups, and third sector organisations. He reported on the key themes in the Regional Strategy which were health and community and social care focussed (as detailed in the report).

The Lead Officer also referred to the key priorities for the Flintshire Dementia Strategy which were detailed in paragraph 1.04 of the report. He said the Strategy was currently in draft stage and consultation and collaboration was being undertaken with key stakeholders. The completed Strategy would be validated with the Regional Dementia Strategy Steering Group in March 2021 to enable publishing and implementation of the key actions from April 2021.

The Senior Manager Integrated Services and Lead Adults :commented on a new priority concerning night-time support for carers looking after people with dementia, the wrap around service, and support for end of life care.

In response to a comment from the Chair around the confusion a person with dementia might experience due to the number of care workers involved in their care, the Senior Manager Integrated Services and Lead Adults explained that the Council and some agencies had introduced measures to help build a relationship between the service user, their carer, and the care worker. She referred to the use of photographs of the care workers and brief one-page profiles to develop familiarity and build a person centred approach.

Councillor Carol Ellis commented on the increased pressure on services due to the pandemic and the anticipated surge in demand when restrictions came to an end, citing an increase in requests for assessment and respite as examples. The Chair also commented on a back-log of people waiting for diagnosis. The Wellbeing and Partnership Lead Officer acknowledged the concerns raised and said that recovery and restart would be the main focus during the first 6 months.

In response to a question from the Chair around the support provided for carers, the Senior Manager Integrated Services and Lead Adults explained that support was provided through respite care services and referred to the night-time service to enable the carer to have rest/sleep, and an increase in direct payment to the carer via NEWCIS to assist the carer. She also advised that carers would be part of the Steering Group for the Dementia Action Plan and that the Council worked closely with NEWCIS and FLVC to ensure that carers views were heard.

Councillor Dave Mackie reported that in 2017 13% of all deaths were due to dementia and it was a leading cause of death, however, research showed that 40% of people who had dementia did not have this recorded on their death certificate. He said diagnosis could take an average of 2 - 4 years and most people were not diagnosed until the condition was well advanced. He said the problem was increasing and spoke of the need to raise awareness to attract more funding.

The recommendations in the report were moved by Councillor Paul Cunningham and seconded by Councillor Dave Mackie.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Committee notes the progress made to develop a Dementia Strategy for Flintshire in collaboration with Health and Social Care providers, to meet the Council Plan objectives; and
- (b) That the further development and implementation of a detailed strategy and action plan to support people living with dementia in Flintshire and their families and carers, in alignment with the North Wales Regional Dementia Strategy that was published in 2020, be supported.

37. RECOVERY STRATEGY UPDATE

The Cabinet Member for Social Services introduced a report to give an update on the development of a strategy for care and support services for people living with dementia in Flintshire. She provided an overview of the support and numerous activities carried out in Flintshire to improve the lives of people living with

dementia and their carers. She also reported on the collaborative work, awareness raising, and training, that the Council undertook with local organisations, businesses, churches, schools, care and nursing homes. The Cabinet Member referred to the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic and said that new and innovative ways of working and maintaining contact had been embraced to ensure people and their carers were not isolated and continued to be involved and received care and support..

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The recommendations in the report were moved by Councillor Paul Cunningham and seconded by Councillor Dave Mackie.

RESOLVED:

That the latest updated risk register and risk mitigation actions within the Social Services portfolio which were appended to the report be noted.

38. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE

There were no members of the press in attendance.

(The meeting started at 2.00 pm and ended at 3.30 pm)

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Chair