

**SOCIAL & HEALTH CARE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**  
**27 MAY 2021**

Minutes of the meeting of the Social & Health Care Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held remotely on Thursday 27 May 2021

**PRESENT:** **Councillor Hilary McGuill (Chair)**

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

**APOLOGIES:** Councillor Marion Bateman

**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, Children’s Resources Manager, Commissioning Manager, Service Manager – Disability Recovery and Progression and Financial Assessment Officer

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

**1. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR**

The Committee was advised that it had been confirmed at the Annual Meeting of the County Council that the Chair of the Committee should come from the Liberal Democrat Group and Councillor Hilary McGuill had been appointed to this role for the municipal year.

**RESOLVED:**

That the appointment of Councillor McGuill as Chair of the Committee be noted.

**2. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR**

Councillor Cindy Hinds nominated Councillor Gladys Healey as Vice-Chair of the Committee and this was duly seconded. There were no further nominations. On being put to the vote, this was carried.

**RESOLVED:**

That Councillor Gladys Healey be appointed Vice-Chair of the Committee.

**3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)**

None were received.

**4. MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 March 2021 were submitted.

The minutes were moved as an accurate record by Councillor Gladys Healey and seconded by Councillor Paul Cunningham.

**RESOLVED:**

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

**5. 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 meetings to be held on 17 June and 1 July 2021, and advised that the items on Intensive Assessment and Therapeutic Support, and Multi Systematic Therapy Project to be considered at the joint meeting with the Education, Youth & Culture Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 17 June, would be combined into a single report.

The Facilitator reported that the Programme would be updated to reflect the schedule of meetings for 2021/22 which had been approved at the Annual Meeting of the County Council held on 25 May.

The Facilitator advised that the Chair had suggested that the new Chief Executive, Betsi Cadwaladr University Hospital, be invited to attend a meeting of the Committee prior to September. This was supported by the Committee.

The Facilitator referred to the action tracking report which was appended to the report and advised that the actions arising from previous meetings had been completed.

The Chair invited members to raise any items they wished to be included on the forward work programme.

Councillor Carol Ellis expressed concerns around the current difficulty in obtaining face-to-face appointments with GPs and commented on the problems experienced by local residents on this matter. She asked that an item on this be included on the forward work programme for discussion. The Chief Officer (Social Services) suggested that a letter be written on behalf of the Committee to Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB) for the attention of Rob Smith and Gareth Bowdler and that it also be raised with the Chief Executive of BCUHB when she attends a meeting of the Committee.

Councillor Cindy Hinds raised concerns around the lack of support provided to residents who were suffering from long Covid symptoms. The Chair suggested that this also be raised with BCUHB following the meeting.

The recommendations in the report were moved by Councillor Dave Mackie and seconded by Councillor Gladys Healey.

**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.

## **6. DIRECTORS ANNUAL REPORT**

Prior to introducing the report the Chief Officer (Social Services) provided informal verbal feedback on the outcome of the Commissioning Inspectorate Wales (CIW) assurance review which was held week beginning 19 April. He advised that feedback from the CIW to date confirmed that overall the Inspection had been positive and reflected many areas of very good practice in Flintshire. The CIW felt assured that vulnerable people (both children and adults) and their families were well supported in Flintshire and during Covid a good level of support both corporately and within Social Services was being provided. Some areas of improvement were identified and an action plan had been commenced in response. The Chief Officer explained that a comprehensive report on the findings of the CIW Inspection would be submitted to the Committee in due course.

In introducing the report the Chief Officer provided background information and advised that a draft of the Social Services Annual Report 2020/21 and 2021/22 Priorities was attached as Appendix 1 to the report and a mock-up of the cover and format was attached as Appendix 2. The Chief Officer paid tribute to the role and contribution of key workers at all levels in supporting vulnerable people throughout the Covid-19 pandemic and spoke of the innovation, success, and quality of social service provision in numerous areas. .

In presenting the report the Commissioning Manager drew attention to the improvement priorities identified for 2021/2022 listed in section 1.11 of the covering report. She reiterated the comments expressed by the Chief Officer around the challenges of the pandemic and said nevertheless projects and schemes had continued in earnest despite the restrictions and innovative ways of providing services had been developed.

The Chair congratulated the Chief Officer and his team, and all involved on the outcome of the CIW inspection. She also congratulated Officers on the high standard of the report on the Director's Annual Report.

In response to a question by the Chair on the impact of Covid-19 on the provision of micro-care, the Commissioning Manager explained that due to the pandemic there had been increased interest and as a result of social media campaigns and online information there were currently 19 micro-care organisations set up which provided a further option in social care provision.

Members spoke in support of the report and congratulated the Chief Officer and his workforce on the high quality and innovative provision of social services in Flintshire. Councillor Paul Cunningham expressed thanks to the Council for the continued support of Double-Click.

Councillor Dave Mackie highlighted a number of typographical errors on the draft report. He also asked that consideration be given to the formatting of the report to provide ease of access by electronic devices.

The recommendations in the report were moved by Councillor Mike Lowe and seconded by Councillor Jean Davies.

**RESOLVED:**

- a) That the draft Annual Report be noted; and
- (b) That the final Annual Report be considered by the Committee at its meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> July, 2021.

**7. REBALANCING CARE & SUPPORT WHITE PAPER**

The Chief Officer (Social Services) introduced the report to enable the Committee to consider the White Paper; note the consultation response submitted from Flintshire; and approve the report. He provided background information and gave a brief summary of the Council's response to the consultation which was appended to the report.

The Commissioning Manager gave an overview of the Rebalancing Care and Support White Paper and the case for change. She referred to the key considerations as detailed in the report and explained that the Council agreed that further change was required and that there was a need for commitment to resources and funding for new structures to create an impact at local level. The Council also agreed that there was a need for major sustainable investment in social care from a revenue and capital perspective, and she commented on the inadequacy of the current funding model to address increasing demands on social care in the future. The Commissioning Manager also commented that the White Paper needed to focus on ensuring that the workforce was paid fairly across the board. The Commissioning Manager advised that there had not been a reply yet from the Welsh Government to the Councils' response on the consultation document.

Councillors Dave Mackie and Paul Cunningham expressed concerns around the proposals in the White Paper and emphasised the need for additional funding at a local level.

The recommendation in the report were moved by Councillor Paul Cunningham and seconded by Councillor Mike Lowe.

**RESOLVED:**

That the Committee approve the report and note the consultation response submitted from Flintshire, as shown at Appendix 1 of the report.

**8. NORTH WALES ADOPTION SERVICE UPDATE**

The Children's Resource Manager introduced the report provide an update on the activities and development of the North Wales Adoption Service (Nwas)

for the period April 2020-March 2021. He commented on the impact of COVID 19 and advised that nevertheless the NWAS was meeting its targets and demonstrating a high level of performance.

The Children's Resource Manager reported on the main considerations, as detailed in the report, and referred to market and recruitment, training, prospective adopters in assessment, children open for adoption, the adoption panel, staffing, and post adoption support services. He reported that the National Adoption Service for Wales – Evaluation of the Adoption Support Framework, Final Report, February 2021, was appended to the report. In summary the Children's Resource Manager advised that the NWAS was making significant progress and delivering high quality, robust, and timely services at a local level in the adoption service.

Members spoke in support of the work of the NWAS and thanked Children's Resource Manager for his hard work and a comprehensive report.

Councillor Dave Mackie expressed concerns around the impact that turnover in social workers had on adoptive children and young people, adoptive parents, and foster carers, and commented on the effect of lack of continuity. Referring to page 255 of the report, Councillor Mackie asked a question around the support provided to adopted children and young people in schools and colleges. The Children's Resource Manager explained that the additional needs of adopted children and young people was understood and said schools were informed of the child's background and 'journey'. He gave reassurance that collaborative work was undertaken with schools to provide ongoing support to the adopted child/young person and commented that no significant concerns had been raised by schools in Flintshire regarding the behaviour of children or young people who were adopted. The Children's Resource Manager also responded to the question raised by Councillor Mackie around post adoption support services and commented that work around the complex issues involved was continuing to improve and being embedded in daily practice

In response to the question raised by Councillor Mackie regarding staff turnover, the Senior Manager – Children and Workforce, commented on the challenge of recruitment and retention of social workers and explained that North Wales had set up a task and finish group to look at how to attract and retain social workers in Children's Services and work was in progress to meet social workers to discuss how best to support their needs, professional career, and well-being with local authorities. He said local work had also been undertaken to expand the career opportunities and structure for social workers.

In response to further comments from the Chair and Councillor Dave Mackie, the Senior Manager – Children and Workforce, suggested that young people be asked to discuss what was important to them during a meeting of the Children's Services Forum, and their responses be brought back to the Committee for consideration.

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

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) That the Committee note the activities and work of the NWAS; and
- (b) That the Committee are assured that those impacted by adoption receive safe, timely and appropriate interventions.

**9. AROSFA**

The Senior Manager Integrated Services and Lead Adults; introduced the report to provide details of the new service model. She provided background information and advised that the new service would offer support for five children and was part of the Council's strategic plan to reduce reliance on out-of-county placements. She invited Members to visit the facility to see the refurbishment work undertaken (subject to Covid requirements). The Senior Manager asked the Service Manager – Disability Recovery and Progression to provide further information around the model of care and shared care arrangements at AROSFA.

The Chair thanked Officers for their overview and commented that the report was inspiring. The Children's Resource Manager said that the atmosphere in the facility was warm, homely, nurturing, and that the needs of the child were paramount.

Councillor Dave Mackie spoke in support of the additional service and said the opportunity to reduce reliance on expensive out of county placements was welcomed along with the potential to increase capacity for respite provision to support children and their families in Flintshire.

The recommendation in the report was moved by Councillor Dave Wisinger and seconded by Councillor Jean Davies.

**RESOLVED:**

That the Committee notes the progress made at Arosfa, and supports the opportunity to provide additional flexible support for up to five children and their families, at any one time, with the aim of keeping families together and close to home.

**10. DEVELOPING IN HOUSE RESIDENTIAL CARE FOR CHILDREN**

The Senior Manager (Children & Workforce) introduced a report to support the move for the Council to become a direct provider of residential care for children. He provided background information and explained that it was important that the development of an in-house residential Children's Care Home was seen as part of a whole system approach to supporting children and young people. This involved a number of complimentary projects which aimed to reduce the number of children looked after and support more children through local authority fostering, as detailed in the report.

The Senior Manager (Children & Workforce) advised that the Council was reliant on the independent sector for Children's Residential Care provision which

was expensive and unsustainable. Placements were often out of area which meant that children were located away from their families, friends, and local communities. To secure change the Council had set a commitment during the next three financial years to review the support provided for children and young people with a view to reducing and potentially removing the need for out of county placements and was working closely with the Council's Housing and Education services, and the Health Service to enable children to be looked after and cared for locally.

In response to a question from the Chair the Senior Manager provided clarification around the financial costs associated with the Small Group Home provision and referred to revenue and capital costs.

In response to a question by Councillor Gladys Healey the Senior Manger advised that the Council did not have corporate parenting responsibility for children from Wrexham Borough Council. He explained that a legal agreement was being drafted to enable Wrexham Borough Council as a partner to make an appropriate contribution for the cost of care provision.

Members spoke in strong support of the pro-active initiatives proposed and thanked Officers for their work. The recommendations in the report were moved by Councillor David Wisinger and seconded by Councillor Mike Lowe

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) That the Committee support the move to become a direct provider of Residential Care for Children; and
- (b) That the Committee support the priority projects for in house development; Arosfa, Ty Nyth, Emergency Provision and Small Group Homes, as outlined within the report

**11. MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES IN FLINTSHIRE**

The Senior Manager – Integrated Services and Lead Adults; introduced a report to highlight the challenges faced within Mental Health Services and the impact of Covid-19 on the mental health of the local population. She provided background information and reported that locally, across the multidisciplinary mental health teams in Flintshire, professionals in health, social care, and the voluntary sector worked in collaboration. This work in combination with the Welsh Government investment in the Together in Mental Health Transformational Programme, there were opportunities to develop services locally that were preventative, and focused on early intervention and community resilience which should lead to improved outcomes for the local population and reduce the need for statutory services.

The Service Manager – Disability Recovery and Progression presented the main considerations in the report which provided an update on mental health services in Flintshire in partnership with Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB) and local third sector partners. She advised that additional information on services to support mental health and well-being was appended to the report.

The Chair thanked Officers for a comprehensive report and suggested that the additional information appended to the report be included on the Council's website to raise public awareness. It was also agreed that a copy of the Flintshire Learning for Recovery & Wellbeing training brochure and link to the Wellbeing programme website be circulated to all Members of the Committee following the meeting.

Councillor Dave Mackie spoke in support of the numerous services in the report which provided information, advice, and guidance to help people gain access to the options available to them. Councillor Paul Cunningham also spoke in support of the proactive stance and initiatives taken by the Council to promote mental health issues and well-being and thanked Officers for their work.

Councillor Gladys Healey commented on the issue of mental health and anxiety amongst young people and adults and asked how many psychiatrists and psychologists were available in Flintshire. The Senior Manager – Integrated Services and Lead Adults; responded to the concerns expressed by Councillor Healey and explained that there was a waiting list for psychology and referred to recruitment, new funding for mental health, and a new needs assessment which would demonstrate the need for more mental health funding and support. The Service Manager – Disability Recovery and Progression advised that there were three community health teams in Social Service for Adults which had psychiatrists and psychologists in each team and explained the demand on the services was very high. Psychiatrists and psychologists for children were based in the Children and Adolescents Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and also North Wales Adolescent Service Provision. .

In response to the comments made by Councillor Gladys Healey, it was agreed that a letter be written to the Welsh Government to ask if a proportion of the additional funding provided to Health Boards across Wales would be provided to local authorities to provide mental health support services and whether additional funding would be provided specifically to address mental health issues arising as a result of the pandemic, and also to ask how many child and adult psychiatrists were in post across Wales and whether there were any concerns around recruitment and retention.

The recommendations in the report were moved by Councillor Paul Cunningham and seconded by Councillor Mike Lowe.

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) That the Committee note the challenges faced within mental health services and the impact Covid-19 was having on the mental health of the local population; and
- (b) That the Committee notes the current provision in place to support their local constituents' needs.

**12. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE**

There were no members of the press in attendance.

(The meeting started at 10.00 am and ended at 12.30 pm)

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**Chair**