

SOCIAL & HEALTH CARE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
9 DECEMBER 2021

Minutes of the meeting of the Social & Health Care Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held at Remote Meeting on Thursday, 9 December 2021

PRESENT: Councillor Hilary McGuill (Chair)

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

APOLOGIES: Councillors Mike Allport and Jean Davies

CONTRIBUTORS: Councillor Christine Jones (Deputy Leader for Partnerships and Cabinet Member for Social Services); Chief Officer (Social Services); Senior Manager – Integrated Services and Lead Adults, Senior Manager – Children; Senior Manager – Safeguarding and Commissioning; Flying Start Manager; Service Manager Disability, Progression and Recovery; Direct Payments Team Manager

IN ATTENDANCE: Social Care and Environment Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator; and Democratic Services Officer.

43. VARIATION IN ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Chair proposed a change in the order of the agenda to enable item 8: Early Years and Flying Start Programmes to be brought forward. This was moved and seconded by Councillors Cunningham and Lowe.

44. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)

None were received.

45. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 30 September 2021 were submitted. The minutes were approved and moved by Councillor Wisinger and seconded by Councillor Lowe.

RESOLVED:

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

46. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME AND ACTION TRACKING (S & H)

The Facilitator presented the current Forward Work Programme and drew attention to the items scheduled for the next meeting of the Committee to be held on 20 January 2022. The Senior Manager – Integrated Services and Lead Adults, explained that in addition to the item on Extra Care which was scheduled for the next meeting of the Committee, she could also submit a regulated service

update from the Services Manager Resources and Regulated Services which would include extra care. This was supported by the Committee.

The Senior Manager – Children referred to the item on Children’s Services Transformation and advised that work to develop children’s homes was progressing well. He suggested that he provided a progress report for information to the next meeting and a detailed report to follow to a future meeting during the year. This was agreed by the Committee.

The Facilitator referred to the actions arising from previous meetings and gave an update on progress to date.

Councillor Healey referred to the action arising from the item on Mental Health Services in Flintshire and asked if a response had been received to the letter and email which had been sent to the Welsh Government (WG). The Facilitator explained that a letter and a number of emails had been sent and a reply was awaited. The Facilitator said she was chasing a response and it was agreed that the action be escalated.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Forward Work Programme be approved;
- (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.

47. SOCIAL CARE WORKFORCE PRESSURES AND RESPONSES

The Chief Officer (Social Services) introduced a report to advise of the challenges associated with recruitment within the social care sector and the national, regional, and local responses. He provided background information and context and gave assurance that the Council’s dedicated management team and staff were continuing to do their utmost to provide responsive services to vulnerable adults and children under current considerable and sustained pressures. He spoke of the increase of demand and complexity of needs, the lack of social workers (particularly at Level 3) and occupational therapists, shortage of a direct care workforce (particularly domiciliary care staff), a reduction in foster carers, and restricted supply of agency/ temporary staff.

The Chair asked how many social workers and occupational therapists were on long-term sickness absence or had left the County Council in the last 12 months. The Chief Officer agreed to provide the number to the Chair following the meeting. He explained that the welfare of staff was paramount and staff were fully supported to ensure health and well-being was maintained and workload/responsibilities were manageable.

Councillor Ellis referred to the comments she had made at the meeting of the Committee held on 30 September, concerning the pressure of £1.952m under

Social Care Commissioning and had said that this did not reflect the current shortages and pressures regarding recruitment of staff.

The Senior Manager – Integrated Services and Lead Adults drew attention to the pressures in Adult and Children’s Services as highlighted in section 1.04 of the report. She said there were vacancies in all levels of social work in Adult Services and commented on the vacancies for Level 3 social workers and occupational therapists. She spoke of the equal value given to recruitment and retention of existing staff and said Adult Services was in ‘Amber’ position which meant that the Service was able to meet its duty of care and undertake assessments but this was taking longer than usual, there was higher demand, and people were being placed on waiting lists and cases were being prioritised. Detailed action plans were being produced and senior management meetings were held each week to monitor the position of care availability. Daily meetings were held with the Maelor Hospital, Wrexham, Ysbyty Glan Clwyd Hospital, Bodelwyddan and the Countess of Chester Hospital to support patients.

The Senior Manager – Integrated Services and Lead Adults referred to the actions as detailed in the report and explained that there was a risk assessment for sickness absence and vacancies. She commented on discussion with the WG around the local authority having parity with the Health Service in terms of pay and terms of conditions for social work and direct care workers. She also spoke of the improvements in occupational therapy and the agreement with Wrexham Maelor Hospital to include the local authority as part of newly qualified Occupational Therapist rotation which would come into effect in the New Year.

Councillor Ellis asked if the criteria for eligibility for the Homecare service would be changing. The Senior Manager – Integrated Services and Lead Adults explained that the Social Services and Well Being Act stipulated that the needs of all people had to be considered. Social Services prioritised need and meets the duty of care under the Act and works in conjunction with the independent sector and volunteer organisations.

The Senior Manager – Children reported on the position on Children’s Services. He explained that all cases, through supervision with the appropriate manager, were being risk assessed to inform where resources were most needed to be deployed, and he cited the example that child protection work was designated as a RAG ‘Red’ status. He drew attention to sections 1.05 and 1.06 in the report and advised that the core principle was that Social Services was prioritising and maintaining its safeguarding responsibilities for all services

In response to a question from Councillor Healey, the Chief Officer advised that there was national consideration being given about a national care service but it was too early to know what this would mean. The Chief Officer expressed the view that national care services were best delivered by local authorities providing local governance.

The Senior Manager – Children commented on the challenges and pressures within Children’s Services and reported on the proactive work in the short, medium and long term, to meet statutory responsibilities and regulatory requirements. He spoke of the difficulty in recruiting experienced social workers and explained a business case had to be made to bring Children’s Level 3 Social

Workers pay to the market rate for the local area. He said there was a call for a standardised national pay scale for social workers and the harmonisation of pay rates for health and social care workers

Councillor Ellis expressed the view that all Members should be made aware of the extreme pressure on Adult and Children's Services Social Services and proposed that this issue be brought to a meeting of the County Council for consideration. This was seconded by Councillors Healey and Bateman. It was agreed that the Chair would provide a briefing paper to County Council.

Councillor Mackie proposed that the issue of pay parity be raised as a recommendation from the Committee and this was seconded by Councillor Bateman. The Senior Manager commented on the call for a standardised national pay scale for social workers and harmonisation of pay rates for health and social care workers. It was agreed that a letter be sent to the Welsh Government on behalf of the Committee to support the call for pay parity.

Councillors Mackie and Bateman moved recommendation (a) below. Councillors Cunningham and Mackie moved recommendations (b) and (c) as follows.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the current staffing crisis in the social care workforce and the impact on the Council's ability to consistently deliver a safe and effective service be acknowledged;
- (b) That the action being taken in response to this crisis to ensure sufficient capacity and resilience to effectively support vulnerable adults and children be supported; and
- (c) That a letter be sent to inform the Welsh Government and County Council.

48. EARLY YEARS AND FLYING START PROGRAMMES

The Senior Manager – Children introduced a report on the extensive work to support parents and families and address the impact the pandemic has had on babies and young children. He provided background information and context and asked Hayley Wilkes, Flying Start Co-ordinator, to present the report.

The Chair paid tribute to all staff who had worked during the pandemic to keep Early Years and Flying Start services and centres open to support key workers. She asked what support was being provided to children, and their families, which had autism, during the pandemic lockdown. The Flying Start Co-ordinator explained that there would not normally be an expectation of a diagnosis of autism to be made for a child under the age of four, however, some children were showing signs of developmental concerns and Autism Spectrum Conditions (ASC) and the Flying Start Programme would be a response to that. Specific programmes support parents with routine, communication, and speech and language before school age. Parents were being supported to access support and quality child care to enable children to have responsive interaction

with an adult or parent in the home. The Flying Start Co-ordinator reported on the main points as detailed in the report.

Councillor Mackie thanked the Flying Start Co-ordinator for an 'uplifting' and comprehensive report and the success of the Early Years and Flying Start Programmes and initiatives.

Councillor Cunningham welcomed the speech and language therapies for young children.

The Chief Officer (Social Services) commented on the effective team working between Children's Services and the Early Years and Flying Start Services which was a key element in addressing the complex demands and challenges on social services. He also spoke about the continued capital investment during challenging times to expand and develop services as referred to in section 1.05 of the report.

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

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the work of the Early Year's Services to proactively support young children and families during the response phase of the pandemic be noted; and
- (b) That the continued work to develop effective seamless services with key partners as part of our recovery strategy to providing the best start for every child be supported.

49. TRANSITION PROGRAMMES – UPDATE ON ACHIEVEMENTS

The Senior Manager – Integrated Services and Lead Adults, introduced a report to provide an update on the achievements of transition programmes. She provided background information on the service provided by the Transition Team within the Child 2 Adult Team and reported on the main points, as detailed in the report, on the support provided to young people with disabilities.

Councillor Mackie spoke in support of accessing the local facilities provided by the Council's Education Services as opposed to using out of county services. The Senior Manager explained that where possible young people were encouraged to remain local and said that transition funding stayed with the individual during their time and needs in education services.

Councillor Bateman commented on the work that Theatr Clwyd undertook in conjunction with Social Services to support young children. In acknowledging the comment made by Councillor Bateman the Chief Officer said that the Service was considering making an application for an accolade in recognition of the work undertaken in partnership with Theatr Clwyd.

The Chief Officer (Social Services) referred to section 2.01 in the report and drew attention to the Transition to Adulthood budget pressure which was

currently included as £0.943m within the Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2022/23 to maintain the level of service required (residential college or home support).

The recommendations in the report were moved by Councillor Healey and seconded by Councillor Bateman.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the information contained in the report be noted; and
- (b) That the challenges in relation to the support required and work ongoing to help families' expectations as well as understanding the challenges in relation to the Additional Learning Needs Act be acknowledged.

50. SUPPORTING THE STABILITY OF THE SOCIAL CARE MARKET

The Senior Manager Safeguarding and Commissioning introduced a report on pressure points within the social care market and the associated action to support sufficiency and stability of high quality provision (to include fees and funding). She advised that the report reflected the support being made available by the Council to create stability in the independent social care market which in turn increased capacity within the system and supported the Health Board to maintain patient flow through the health system and supported the discharge of patients back into the community.

The Senior Manager reported on the main considerations as detailed in the report.

The Chair thanked the Senior Manager for the high standard of the report and praised the initiatives to address the issues raised.

Councillor Mackie spoke in support of the Falls Task and Finish Group referred to in section 1.07 of the report. He endorsed the comments of the Chair in support of the quality of the report and the initiatives in place. Councillor Mackie referred to the letter which was appended to the report from the North Wales Regional Leadership Board to the Welsh Government and suggested that the Committee supported the letter. The proposal was seconded by Councillor Bateman and agreed by the Committee.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Committee notes the progress made to support the stability of the social care sector in Flintshire; and
- (b) That the letter which was appended to the report from the North Wales Regional Leadership Board to the Welsh Government be supported by the Committee.

51. DIRECT PAYMENTS

The Senior Manager – Integrated Services and Lead Adults introduced a report to provide an update on Direct Payments. She provided background information and asked the Direct Payments Team Manager to present the report and explain the direct payments scheme. A short film on the Direct Payments Support Service accompanied the report.

In response to the question raised by Councillor Mackie concerning the employment of Personal Assistants, the Direct Payments Team Manager explained that if individuals chose to engage Personal Assistants they became employers and received information and support from the Direct Payments Support Service.

Members and the Chief Officer (Social Services) spoke in praise of the Direct Payments Scheme and the support service provided. The Chair commented on the need to raise awareness of the Service for families who had members being admitted into care.

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

RESOLVED:

That the information contained in the report and the progress made be noted.

52. COUNCIL PLAN 2021-22 MID-YEAR PERFORMANCE REPORTING

The Chief Officer (Social Services) introduced the report and provided background information. He advised that the mid-year performance monitoring report for the 2021/22 Council Plan was positive and showed that 70% of activities were making good progress with 73% likely to achieve planned outcomes; 53% of the performance indicators had met or exceeded targets; 2% were being closely monitored and 20% were currently not meeting target. The remaining 25% accounted for measures which were new and were being monitored as a baseline year. There were no performance indicators (PIs) which showed a red RAG status for current performance against targets relevant to the Social & Health Care Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

The Chief Officer responded to the comments and questions raised by Councillor Dave Mackie on the data appended to the report.

Referring to the final safeguarding action concerning the duty to report as detailed on page 103 of the report, the Chair emphasised that it was everyone's duty to report and explained that the form to be completed was ambiguous in terms of who was to be informed. The Chief Officer acknowledged the points raised and suggested that this be referred to the Corporate Safeguarding Panel. The Senior Manager – Safeguarding and Commissioning advised that work was being undertaken to include the reporting process on the Council's website to speed up matters. The Chair raised further questions around the data presented on targets on safeguarding on page 105. She asked if a track was kept of the safeguarding incidents reported. The Senior Manager – Safeguarding and Commissioning explained that the PARIS system was used to combine all safeguarding incidents reported. The Chair referred to page 107 and the action

on developing the services offered to provide respite for families with disabled children and asked if this included families with an autistic child. The Senior Manager – Integrated Services and Lead Adults explained that this would be determined by the level of need and said respite care was available and referred to the support provided by Arosfa and the direct payments scheme.

The following recommendation was moved by Councillor Healey and seconded by Councillor Bateman.

RESOLVED:

That the Mid-Year Performance Monitoring Report be received.

53. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE

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

(The meeting started at 2.00 pm and ended at 4.35 pm)

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Chair