

SOCIAL & HEALTH CARE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
2 MARCH 2023

Minutes of the Social & Health Care Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held as a hybrid meeting on Thursday, 2 March 2023

PRESENT: Councillor Hilary McGuill (Chair)

Councillors: Mel Buckley, Tina Claydon, Paul Cunningham, Robert Davies, Gladys Healey, David Mackie, Debbie Owen and Linda Thomas

APOLOGY: Councillor Jean Davies

SUBSTITUTION: Councillor Anthony Wren (Carol Ellis)

CONTRIBUTORS: Councillor Christine Jones (Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Social Services and Wellbeing); Chief Officer (Social Services); Senior Manager - Safeguarding and Commissioning; Senior Manager Children and Workforce; Senior Manager for Adults; Workforce Development Manager; Registered Manager Resources and Regulated Services; Planning and Development Officer; James Hunt - Nanny Biscuit and Nat Swift - Micro-Carer

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

45. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)

Councillor Debbie Owen - Volunteer at Nanny Biscuit.

46. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 January 2023 were approved, as moved by Councillor Gladys Healey and seconded by Councillor Dave Mackie.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be approved as a correct record.

47. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME AND ACTION TRACKING

The Social Care and Environment Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator presented the current Forward Work Programme and in response to the Chair, agreed to see if the advanced visit to the North East Wales Community Equipment Services could take place on morning of 20 April prior to the meeting in the afternoon. She also confirmed that both Action Tracking items had been completed and were now closed.

The Chair requested that a letter be sent to the new Interim Chair of the Board of Betsi Cadwaladr.

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 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.

48. NANNY BISCUIT

James Hunt gave a presentation on his background and the setting up of Nanny Biscuit. After leaving school, he became a Gas Engineer before joining the Army in 2010 but unfortunately due to an injury while serving in Afghanistan, had to leave. Suffering both mentally and physically he wanted to help people rather than be helped himself and so he set up Nanny Biscuit in 2018 - named after his Nan who passed away in 2017 as she used to give him biscuits. He realised his passion was helping the Community when he provided Christmas dinner and entertainment to those suffering from loneliness and isolation. He then sought help to gain more knowledge to develop other ideas that he had, such as free holistic therapies. With his background as a gas engineer, he had thought of doing something along the lines of DIY SOS but as this would have been costly, he turned his plumbing and heating company CAF Gas into a Social Enterprise in 2020 in order to use its profits and assets to help the most vulnerable in the Community rather than seek grants. Due to the pandemic, it had to be put on hold and he decided to just concentrate on the Nanny Biscuit side of things. He showed Members a video of what they did during the pandemic which included delivering food parcels, provided outdoor concert to a Care Home, buddie calling for emotional support to isolated people and in collaboration with MoneySuperMarket, they delivered over 44,000 meals.

During the second lockdown, he set up an annual event of seven days of activities and challenges around Wales called a Grand Week in Wales in order to get Communities working together.

There were now three food pantries in Connah's Quay, Shotton and Sandycroft which were run by a group of volunteers. Money raised from selling 10 items of food for £3, donated by FairShare, was used along with donations to buy key staple items.

Councillor Mackie asked about the impact of the closure of the Shotton site due to the lack of funding from the Council for rent. In response, James said that currently it would be a major problem as they were unable to cover the cost due to the increase of the price of food. The Chair questioned the size of the premises that they needed and James informed Members that people not only came in for food; they also came in for the social side and have a cup of tea and a chat which had been a big benefit of the pantries.

Both Councillors Mackie and Gladys Healey suggested that James contacted them direct so they could share ideas, as they both ran drop-in centres a couple of days a week in their areas to ease loneliness.

49. CULTIVATING SOCIAL WORK AND OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY STUDENTS 'GROWING OUR OWN'

The Workforce Development Manager introduced the report by stating that social care was becoming more challenging as people now had more complex and demanding social health and care needs. She stressed that Social Services had a strong and stable workforce that was key to delivering high quality, effective and consistent practice to those that needed it and by investing development within the workforce helped make employees feel valued which increased motivation and improved job satisfaction. She explained that every year the service was in receipt of a grant from Social Care Wales called the Social Care Wales Workforce Development Programme Grant which had recently been reviewed and had increased the Social Work Offer to Local Authorities.

The Chief Officer (Social Services) congratulated the Workforce Development Manager and the team on the creative way that they had taken forward the successful workforce development within the portfolio, stating that currently there were no vacancies for Occupational Therapists or Adult Social Workers and that they were also practically fully staffed on Residential Childcare workers. There were, however, known issues in Children's Social Work which the Senior Manager (Children and Workforce) and the team were working through.

In response to a comment by Councillor Mackie, the Senior Manager for Adults said that they had taken some initiatives with local High Schools within their Health and Social Care Courses that were run locally and had given talks on what it was like to be a Social Worker which had inspired a number of students to take it further. In addition, they regularly went into Glyndwr University to promote the role.

Councillor Gladys Healey asked if people were recruited from different minorities so that Social Workers were able to understand the different cultures. In response, the Senior Manager - Safeguarding and Commissioning confirmed that Social Working Teams across Flintshire were representative of the diversity of Flintshire and had a number of people from different ethnic backgrounds and Eastern European communities and equally important, Welsh speaking Social Workers.

Councillor Wren questioned if more mature applicants with relevant life skills were excluded for the Occupational Therapy Traineeship, given the qualifications listed in 1.06 of the report. In response the Senior Manager - Safeguarding and Commissioning explained that as a degree course, the application process was dictated by the University but support was also offered to individuals to undertake an entrance course so that they could then go and access the degree course. She also confirmed that there was no discrimination to the application process and that Flintshire funded both the Foundation Course plus the additional two years.

The recommendation in the report was moved by Councillor Mackie and seconded by Councillor Wren.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee acknowledges and supports the efforts being made to cultivate and develop social work and occupational therapy students within the Council.

50. HOW TO BECOME A MICRO CARER

The Planning and Development Officer gave background to the report stating that following the successful completion of the pilot project - funded through Foundational Economy, Cadwyn Clwyd and Flintshire to support small enterprises or sole traders to deliver direct personal care and a wider well-being service within Flintshire - additional funding had been gained through the Welsh Government Foundational Economy Challenge Fund to enable Micro-Care to be developed into established services that could be offered.

He briefly outlined the various stages on how to become a Micro-Carer before introducing the first commissioned Micro-Carer - Nat Swift to give his experience of being a Micro-Carer. He explained that it was his friend who had suggested he become a Micro-Carer whilst helping him care for his father. After contacting Flintshire, he started work as a Micro-Carer in 2022 and was asked if he wanted to go down the Commissioned route, stating that the bulk of his work was within Flintshire. He had three clients in Wrexham who were privately commissioned and not given to him via Wrexham Council unlike the Flintshire clients who were a mixture of private clients, clients commissioned by Flintshire and direct payment clients. The difference between a Micro-carer and a Care Agency worker was the variety of support that a Micro-Carer could give by getting more involved in their lives and could offer a wider range of services from emotional and physical care to domestic and clerical.

When asked by the Chair about referrals, he informed Members that he was either commissioned by Flintshire, received recommendations via NEWCIS or contacted via Internet searches but increasingly he was recommended via referrals from other Micro-Carers.

In response to Councillor Gladys Healey's query regarding safeguarding, he advised that all Micro Carers had to go through a recruitment and business development process and that he also received information and support as a member of NACAS (National Association of Care and Support Workers). Both Flintshire and Wrexham also gave advice and support on policies, procedures and guidelines from which he tailored his own business. In terms of safeguarding, he stated that being a commissioned Micro-Carer, he had to have professional indemnity insurance and public limited liability insurance which was financed by Flintshire for up to six years as his business developed. In addition, the training process covered various aspects, eg lone working, risk assessments, manual handling, food hygiene etc, which fed into policies each Micro-Carer had. Flintshire also had a Quality Monitoring Programme whereby he was assessed on an ongoing basis. He also kept a daily record of events for each client.

The Planning and Development Officer advised Members of an 'Indeed' campaign in January and an engagement with NEWCIS via their newsletter which was delivered across the area with the main source of enquiries via word of mouth, in response to Councillor Mackie who asked how they received 25 enquires in a month.

He added that as part of their funding, they attended quarterly meetings with Welsh Government. Through this, they approached them on a number of legislations and they had become more interested in wider conversations in developing a National position so that there could be some standardisation of care across Wales when questioned by Councillor Mackie on Welsh Government involvement.

Nat Swift responded to the Chair's question about what happened if he was off on sick leave by saying that it depended on individual client relationships as each client would have a personalised contingency plan with a variety of contacts that could be contacted in his absence. He added that in his experience not all his duties were time critical so that he could work around care with the client particularly if he had a personal appointment. They were currently looking into developing a buddy system.

When asked how complaints were dealt with, he informed that it depended on the nature of the complaint. If it was of a criminal nature then it went to the relevant authorities but advised that there was a complaints policy and procedure in place and if he was unable resolve it then it went to the Micro-Care team.

The recommendation in the report was moved by Councillor Gladys Healey and seconded by Councillor Rob Davies.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee notes the update on the Micro-Care project in Flintshire to give an understanding of the process to become a Micro-Carer.

51. UPDATE ON CHILDREN'S RESIDENTIAL CARE

The Senior Manager (Children and Workforce) gave background to the report by referring back to discussion last year on a strategy called 'Care Closer to Home' which set out their ambition to develop five in-house high quality Residential Children's Care Homes to support Children requiring local residential care. He introduced the Registered Manager Resources and Regulated Services who gave more in-depth detail as set out in the report into the homes listed below:-

- Tŷ Nyth – a registered Home with MST therapy to support family reunification
- Y Dderwen – a registered Home providing long term placement stability
- Mesen Fach – a crisis flat offering short term placements in emergencies
- Small Group Homes supporting 1 or 2 children in bespoke community-based settings

He confirmed that they were on course to open on the dates as outlined in the report and had been successful in recruiting staff.

Councillor Owen asked if sibling groups would be mixed with other children in Tŷ Nyth and in response the Registered Manager Resources and Regulated Services said that it was key to success to get the matching process right whether it be a mix with a sibling group or individual children. The impact would be significant on all four children if the matching process was wrong. However, some of the learning points were that it was best that four children did not move in at the same time and should be worked with in different locations. Ideally the first child should move in to start the 12 week programme followed by the other three at four-week intervals, by which time the first child would be transitioning back into their home environment.

In response to Councillor Mackie, the Registered Manager Resources and Regulated Services stated that they were limited to the number of children they could support but that it was important to train and support the right staff as it would be them that made significant changes to the children. The Senior Manager (Children and Workforce) added that in respect of out of county placements that were already in the system, they would be phased out over the next three years as the children would still need to be supported. The in-house costs were not necessarily cheaper as on average it cost £500,000 to run a 4-bedroom home due to staff overheads, insurance and food etc. The positives were that the service was able to control the quality of care in preparing young people to adulthood.

The recommendation in the report was moved by Councillor Paul Cunningham and seconded by Councillor Debbie Owen.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee notes progress to develop the in-house residential care as part of Care Closer to Home strategy.

52. FLINTSHIRE PROVIDER SERVICES – REGULATORY ISSUES, SERVICE EFFECTIVENESS AND DEVELOPMENT

The Registered Manager Resources and Regulated Services introduced the report as in his role as a Responsible Individual for Flintshire and explained that it was his job to ensure the quality of care provided to services, to meet the statutory guidance as set out in the Regulations and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016 (RISCA). Each Service area has to provide its own statement of purpose and are inspected and monitored on an annual basis by Care Inspectorate Wales.

The services covered were:-

- Older People's residential care homes – Marleyfield House, Llys Gwenffrwd and Croes Atti
- Extra Care Housing – Llys Eleanor, Llys Jasmine, Llys Raddington, Plar Yr Ywen

- Older People’s Community Support – Holywell, Deeside and Mold localities
- Short-term respite for people with a learning disability – Hafod and Woodlee
- Supported Living – 17 houses across Flintshire
- Children’s Services Tŷ Nyth, Park Avenue and the small Group Homes

In response to questions raised by the Chair, the Registered Manager Resources and Regulated Services confirmed that both resident and tenant meetings took place but at a recent inspection he had requested Managers to increase attendance to access a broader cross-section of people, as the same 5-6 people were always attending. Catering staff were now included as a result of the work they had done to improve the quality. He confirmed that the average increase of £80 per week to the service charges was correct due to the cost of living rise and that he was in conversation with Clwyd Alyn and Wales & West and had requested that the rates were reduced as the cost of living crisis changed. He advised that they consulted with all tenants prior to the increase and that the Financial Assessment Team had been to see the tenants to make sure they were receiving the right financial support. He added that the cost of a standard one-bed apartment had increased from £240 to £320 per week and would cost slightly more for a 2-bed apartment when further questioned by Councillor Wren.

The recommendation in the report was moved by Councillor Dave Mackie and seconded by Councillor Mel Buckley.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee accepts the report and notes the requirements of the role of Responsible Individual.

53. MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS IN ATTENDANCE

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

(The meeting started at 2.00 pm and ended at 4.22 pm)

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Chair