

SOCIAL & HEALTH CARE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

8 JUNE 2023

Minutes of the Social & Health Care Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held as a hybrid meeting on Thursday, 8 June 2023

PRESENT: Councillor Arnold Woolley (Chair)

Councillors: Mel Buckley, Tina Claydon, Gladys Healey, Dennis Hutchinson, David Mackie, Hilary McGill, Debbie Owen and Linda Thomas

APOLOGY: Councillor Marion Bateman

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Andrew Parkhurst attended as an observer

CONTRIBUTORS: Councillor Christine Jones (Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Social Services and Wellbeing); Chief Officer (Social Services); Senior Manager for Adults: Service Manager: Operations Manager and OT Manager

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

1. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

The Facilitator advised that it had been confirmed at the Annual Meeting of the County Council that the Chair of the Committee should come from the Eagle Group. The Committee was advised that Councillor Arnold Woolley had been appointed to this role for the municipal year.

RESOLVED:

That the appointment of Councillor Arnold Woolley as Chair of the Committee be noted.

2. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR

Councillor Tina Claydon nominated Councillor Hilary McGill as Vice-Chair of the Committee which was seconded by Councillor Gladys Healey. No other nominations were received.

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Hilary McGill be appointed Vice-Chair of the Committee.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)

None.

4. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 20th April, 2023 were approved, as moved by Councillor Dave Mackie and seconded by Councillor Hilary McGuill.

The minutes of the meeting held on 27th April, 2023 were submitted and subject to the rewording of the first paragraph on page 8 and the typographical error in the first paragraph of item 60 - should read "as" and not "at" - were moved by Councillor McGuill and seconded by Councillor Mackie.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the minutes of the meeting held on 20th April were approved as a correct record; and
- (b) That subject to the amendment requested by Councillor Mackie, the minutes of the meeting held on 27th April, 2023 be approved as a correct record.

5. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME AND ACTION TRACKING

The Social Care and Environment Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator presented the current Forward Work Programme and requested that Members should contact her if they had any items to put forward as there were some spaces available. She also confirmed that both Action Tracking items had been completed and where applicable added to the Forward Work Programme.

Councillor Tina Claydon requested that a report on Domestic Abuse be added to the Forward Work Programme which the Facilitator advised that she would report back to the next meeting after she had checked if it came under the remit of this Committee as it could fall under others. She suggested a possibility of a joint Committee meeting to enable other Members to join in.

The recommendations within the report were moved and seconded by Councillors Dave Mackie and 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.

6. NORTH EAST WALES COMMUNITY EQUIPMENT SERVICE (NEWCES)

The Chief Officer (Social Services) congratulated Councillor Woolley and Councillor McGuill on their appointments of Chair and Vice-Chair respectively and added that he and officers looked forward to working with this Committee as effectively as they had in the past before passing over to Senior Manager for Adults and the Operations Manager.

The Operations Manager introduced the report stating that the North East Wales Community Equipment Service (NEWCES) was formed in 2009 which was jointly funded by three partners being Wrexham County Borough Council, Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board and Flintshire County Council and has units in Hawarden and Queensferry. Their purpose was to provide equipment to reduce hospital admissions and increase hospital discharges to enable people to cope independently in their own home. He also advised that 93% of the items that they collected, when they were no longer needed, were refurbished and quality checked before being reused saving an estimated £2.2m per year.

Councillor Hilary McGuill thanked Jamie and his staff for the visit that morning around the Hawarden Unit and requested that the Committee recommend that apprentices be appointed, to avoid using contractors, which would make an even greater saving which was seconded by the Chair.

Councillor Mackie proposed that the Committee thank Jamie and his team for the visit and presentation which was seconded by the Chair and wanted to congratulate them on continuing to improve the facilities they provided in order to keep on saving money.

The Chief Officer (Social Services) thanked Members for their kind comments.

The recommendations within the report were moved by Councillor McGuill and seconded by Councillor Claydon.

RESOLVED:

- (a) To look into the possibility of Apprentices working with the Team;
- (b) That a letter from the Committee be sent to the team congratulating them on their work;
- (c) That Members acknowledge the successful work of the NEWCES in support of hospital avoidance and safe return from hospital settings; and
- (d) That the Committee recognises the significant work undertaken in reusing equipment and cost avoidance savings for partners that supports the regional programme.

7. UPDATE ON OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY SERVICES

The OT Manager introduced the report and explained that Occupational Therapy was focused on what everyday people across every age range did in their everyday lives and supported them to remain as independent as possible. She gave a brief overview of the different teams and services user groups they worked with, as set out in the report:-

- Locality
- Reablement
- Paediatrics
- Intake Team

In response to a question raised by Councillor Mackie, the Senior Manager for Adults advised that from a performance point of view, Flintshire had a superb track record for providing a comprehensive OT Service which was demonstrated by the fact that they had very few staff vacancies unlike in previous years. She explained that people did not wait a long time for OT and advised that referrals were categorised into high, medium or low and dealt with accordingly.

Councillor Gladys Healey asked how long it took for equipment to be collected once it was no longer needed. The Senior Manager for Adults explained that they were only able to collect equipment when they were notified that it was no longer required. She stated that in the case of a bereavement, contacting them would be low down on people's list which could lead to equipment not being collected. She advised Members that a significant amount of NEWCES equipment, which could easily be identified by the barcode, had been returned following an amnesty around charity shops.

The Operations Manager added that Welsh Government had set a standard of a 14 day reaction time to collect equipment from notification which they had met 100%. He also informed Members that if they were contacted after a bereavement and the equipment was causing distress then it was collected within 3 days.

Councillor McGuill asked for an explanation on waiting lists for equipment and how they were reviewed. The Senior Manager for Adults explained that when the Single Point of Access team (SPOA) were contacted for help a thorough assessment was carried out, which she advised could be time consuming as they needed to look at the whole picture which often identified other issues that could be improved upon. She explained that often equipment was not necessary as people just needed to be re-educated on how to do things. She advised that they were working very hard to keep the 3 months waiting list down and that people were regularly contacted in case their circumstances had changed. She stated that she was not concerned at the length of the list as she would rather people receive the correct help and advice. She also pointed out that it would be dangerous to give out equipment that was requested as a short-term measure before people were assessed as it may not be what they really need. The OT Manager added that by doing that under

the old system of self-assessment, 80% of people needed further home visits which duplicated their work.

In response to a further question raised by Councillor McGuill concerning futureproofing Disabilities Facilities Grant (DFG) for pediatrics, the OT Manager explained that they looked to the future as to how the child would progress but advised that they did not want to intervene too quickly as the child may improve with surgery or physio. Sometimes a longer period was taken to ensure that the end result would meet the child's needs when they were between 14 and 18. She advised that they try to futureproof properties, look for new build properties or extend the existing properties to meet the whole family's needs.

The Facilitator advised Members that as DFGs came under the terms of reference for the Community & Housing Overview & Scrutiny Committee, it had been agreed that there would be a joint item at the October meeting.

The Chief Officer (Social Services) informed Members that Occupational Therapy was one of the key professional groups within Social Services and often did not get the profile that they deserved, but he hoped that Members were better informed of the service after this meeting. He stated that they were in a much improved position, as Members had observed, in terms of staffing levels being nearly full, waiting lists being significantly improved and thanked officers for their presentations.

The recommendation was amended at the request of the Chair and this was moved by Councillor McGuill and seconded by Councillor Mackie.

RESOLVED:

That Members note, support and approve the content of the report and work carried out by the Occupational Therapy Services.

8. EARLY HELP AND INTERVENTION IN CHILDREN'S SERVICES

The Service Manager reported that the Early Help Hub (EHH) was developed in 2017 to bring together agencies to target support for families in need who did not meet statutory thresholds for children's social care but had clear indicators of need often aligned to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE's).

She explained that the demand for this service had increased significantly over the years and that the majority of referrals were from parents of children aged between 10 to 15 seeking information and advice. So in late 2022 a series of workshops were set up which led to the development of the Information, Advice and Assistance (IAA) which became operational in February 2023. The service provided support to families via conversations with a team of skilled workers.

Councillor Debbie Owen sought clarification on how to contact the IAA service and the Service Manager explained that as it was a new

service at present, people should contact Children's Services and ask for the IAA Service but they that they were looking into having a separate number subject to demand of the service.

In response to clarification between the EHH and IAA raised by Councillor Mackie, the Service Manager explained that because of the increase of referrals to the EHH that were taking 4 to 6 weeks, the IAA service filtered out those who only needed information and advice and not a support package.

Councillor McGuill suggested that with the explanation that was given between the EHH and IAA, that the IAA should be the single contact number for parents to seek advice and then they could be referred to other services if needed. She also requested a breakdown of all of the referrals and where they were coming from as the report suggested that they were all coming from Deeside - which the Service Manager agreed to circulate.

Councillor Gladys Healey questioned whether any referrals came from rural areas. The Service Manager pointed out that the report reflected the highest recorded areas and that referrals were received across Flintshire.

As an observer Councillor Parkhurst questioned what steps were being taken with carers having a healthy attachment with their children. In response, the Senior Manager said that she worked closely with Gail Bennett and her team and that her team worked closely with Early Years and Health visitors supporting those families with difficulties with attachment which linked in with adoption services as well. They advised that they also had close links with statutory partners and front door services.

Councillor Mackie gave his support to the initiatives that the Service Manager was looking into and where those may lead as he believed that was the way forward.

The recommendations were moved by Councillor Hilary McGuill and seconded by Councillor Gladys Healey.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Committee supports the ongoing work and commitment to the Early Help Hub as part of wider programme to support families experiencing trauma aligned to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and
- (b) That the Committee supports the newly developed Information, Advice and Assistance Services in providing support to families through skilled conversations which will clarify people's thoughts and explore their circumstances so we can understand "What Matters" most to them and how best to support them.

9. SOCIAL SERVICES ANNUAL REPORT

Before introducing the report, the Chief Officer (Social Services) gave credit to Marianne Evans and Dawn Holt for writing the report which he described as an enjoyable, interesting and positive read which was collaborated by the feedback received from Members.

He reminded Members that the report was produced as a statutory requirement as legislated in the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014. He asked the Committee to support the draft as he intended to take it to Cabinet on 20th June rather than 18th July to allow time to publish bilingually.

Before opening up to Members for any comments, the Chair stated that he found structure and detail most refreshing.

Councillor Mackie commented that the first ever report that was done 10 years ago was aimed at the regulator as well as the public who both had different requirements but this report, which was really well written, had covered everything and that he was amazed at how many initiatives had come forward in that time.

Councillor McGuill emphasised that when it was time to look at the budget, there was a need for more money than they had now as all of the initiatives were where the money was being spent.

The recommendation within the report was moved and seconded by Councillors Gladys Healey and Mel Buckley.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee approves the draft report, which includes the key developments of the past year and our priorities for 2023/24.

10. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS IN ATTENDANCE

There were no members of the press in attendance.

(The meeting started at 2.00 pm and ended at 3.45 pm)

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Chair