

SOCIAL AND HEALTH CARE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
4 OCTOBER 2012

Minutes of the meeting of the Social and Health Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee of the Flintshire County Council held at County Hall, Mold on Thursday, 4 October 2012

PRESENT: Councillor C.A. Ellis (Chair)

Councillors: M. Bateman, V. Gay, C. Hinds, S. Jones, R.B. Lloyd, M. Lowe, H.J. McGuill, D.I. Mackie, H.G. Roberts, I. Smith and D.E. Wisinger

APOLOGY:

Councillor P.J. Curtis

CONTRIBUTORS:

Cabinet Member for Social Services, Director of Community Services, Head of Social Services for Children

For minute number 33 - Mrs. Somerton-Edwards, Head of the Corporate Parenting Service at Wrexham County Borough Council

For minute number 34 – Children’s Partnership Co-ordinator

For minute number 35 - Head of Social Services for Adults, Head of Development and Resources and Partnership Manager Health Social Care and Wellbeing Strategy

IN ATTENDANCE:

Learning and Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Facilitator and Committee Officer

30. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor H.J. McGuill declared a personal interest due to her being on Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board Community Health Council.

31. START TIME OF MEETINGS

Prior to the consideration of the minutes, a discussion ensued about whether the meeting could be started earlier than 2pm as some Members had to leave early due to other commitments. It was suggested that the Learning and Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Facilitator look at the options available which could include holding the meeting in the morning instead of the afternoon, or starting at 1pm instead of 2pm.

RESOLVED:

That the Learning and Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Facilitator look at the options available which could include holding the meeting in the morning instead of the afternoon, or starting at 1pm instead of 2pm.

32. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 2 July 2012 and 26 July 2012 had been circulated to Members with the agenda.

Matters Arising – 2 July 2012

Members were advised of the following:-

- That an email had been sent on the figures for compliments and complaints in the previous year but would be re-sent
- That a breakdown of sickness figures for the workforce had been provided to Members as requested
- That the Looked After Children Nurse was funded by Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board

Matters Arising – 26 July 2012

The Head of Social Services for Children advised that Arosfa was opening on Saturday, 6 October 2012 and that Members would be invited to an official launch at a later date.

RESOLVED:

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

33. NORTH WALES ADOPTION SERVICE

The Head of Social Services for Children introduced a report to provide Members with details of the current operational activity for the North Wales Adoption Service (NWAS).

The background to the report was detailed and the Head of Social Services for Children explained that the project was currently hosted by Wrexham County Borough Council but overseen by the six North Wales Heads of Children's Services who met quarterly as the NWAS Board. She also provided details of the challenges for the service which included the use of ex-consortium placements for certain circumstances such as for children with special needs or where there were threats from the birth parents. There were plans to establish a National Adoption Service in Wales and she commented on the possibility of hosting an All Wales register. The Head of Social Services for Children introduced Mrs. Somerton-Edwards who was the Head of the Corporate Parenting Service at Wrexham County Borough Council and Peter Robson who was the Service Manager link for the NWAS and a member of the NWAS Operational Management Group (OMG).

Councillor D.I. Mackie explained that the draft version of the NWAS Partnership Agreement had been submitted to Executive in March 2010 and to Social and Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee in October 2010.

However, he queried whether the final version of the Partnership Agreement had ever been scrutinised. The Head of Social Services for Children said that the agreement had been seen by the Legal Department and that copies of the final version had been circulated to Members following the Overview and Scrutiny meeting in October 2010. Councillor Mackie raised concern that Members were not aware of the standards that the NWAS was working to. He was also disappointed to see that a number of comparisons had been made with the first year of the service which he did not feel was valid and said that he would have preferred to see comparisons against the standards which had been set which the Committee had not seen.

The Chair asked if the NWAS was as good as the service that had been provided by the Flintshire Adoption Service. She said that the Committee was concerned that standards dropped when collaborations took place and referred to the percentage figures reported in the performance indicators, which were poor. The Head of Social Services for Children said that the standards were the national minimum for adoption and that robust discussions about performance indicators had taken place with the NWAS Board to ensure that the service had not worsened in the first few months of the new arrangements. Mrs. Somerton-Edwards said that in future, the service planned to report on national minimum standards and local indicators. The Head of Social Services for Children said that a report comparing the last year of Flintshire's Adoption Service with the first year of NWAS could be provided for Members.

Councillor H.J. McGuill queried whether the £30,000 to place a child outside the consortium was reciprocated if a child came into Flintshire from another area; the Head of Social Services for Children confirmed that this was the case. In response to a question from Councillor McGuill, Mrs. Somerton-Edwards said that in some cases it could take 12 months to place a child depending on the availability of suitable adopters. The length of time that the 30 children who were currently on the waiting list had been waiting to be adopted varied but for some it would have been a long time; Councillor McGuill felt that this was unacceptable. The Head of Social Services for Children detailed the review arrangements which were in place and spoke of the nationally recognised challenges to place sibling groups or older children.

Councillor S. Jones said that the staffing structure showed that Wrexham office had a large number of staff but that there were only three staff for Flintshire which she felt was unfair. The figure for approved adopters for Flintshire was also lower than Wrexham and Councillor Jones asked if this was due to a lack of staff. Mrs. Somerton-Edwards reassured Members that the staff were used across the region to undertake assessments as required. The Head of Social Services for Children added that the social workers were all part of the North Wales team and that assessments would be allocated to whoever had the capacity to undertake them. Following comments from Members, Mrs. Somerton-Edwards agreed that the composition of the report needed to be reviewed and that further detail on the budget could be provided.

The Director of Community Services said that it was important to ensure that the quality of the adoption service was as good as it could be and that Flintshire got value for its contribution to the service. He added that the final partnership agreement could be circulated to Members.

Following a question from Councillor C. Hinds about whether a medical condition could prevent someone from adopting, Mrs. Somerton-Edwards said that it depended on the condition. She added, in response to a question from Councillor McGuill, that she hoped that those who had used the service would give negative feedback if they felt that it was appropriate as it could lead to improvements in the service.

Councillor D.E. Wisinger queried details reported on the budget for the service and it was agreed that Mrs. Somerton-Edwards would provide a written response which would also give details of travel expenses. The Chair also requested a copy of the Improvement Action Plan for the Adoption Service in relation to the recent inspection.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the report be received;
- (b) That the composition of the report be reviewed; and
- (c) That the following further information be provided to Members:
 - i. a report comparing the last year of Flintshire's Adoption Service with the first year of North Wales Adoption Service
 - ii. a copy of the improvement action plan
 - iii. further information on travel expenses
 - iv. a detailed breakdown of the budget
 - v. a copy of the final version of the Partnership Agreement.

34. FLYING START STRATEGIC PLAN 2013 – 2015

The Children's Partnership Co-ordinator introduced a report to provide Members with details of the proposed expansion of the Flying Start Programme in Flintshire.

The Co-ordinator provided a detailed background for Members of the Flying Start Programme and explained that it was a prescriptive programme which was targeted at 0-3 year olds in the most disadvantaged communities in Wales. The programme had four key elements which were detailed, and was previously based on free school meals targets. It had now been proposed by Welsh Government (WG) that the programme should be expanded into new areas which had the highest concentration of 0-3 year olds living in income benefit households. Information had been provided by WG as the basis for selecting the new areas for expansion but further work was required to define the exact number of 0-3 year olds living in the identified areas. The proposed expansion areas were detailed in the report for 2013-2014 and 2014-2015.

The Co-ordinator explained that a detailed plan was attached to the report and that there was an expectation that it would continue to evolve.

Councillor M. Bateman raised concern about areas within the Broncoed Ward that were not included in the areas for expansion and Councillor S. Jones commented on deprived areas within her ward which had also been omitted. The Head of Social Services for Children concurred with the comments and said that the work which had recently been undertaken by Cordis Bright could also be considered as part of the further work to be carried out on the calculation of numbers affected. The Chair suggested that a letter be sent from the Committee to WG to express the concerns about how the areas for expansion had been determined.

In response to a question from Councillor H.G. Roberts on the criteria used to identify the areas, the Director of Community Services said that the criteria had been determined by WG and that WG had provided the maps to use; this meant that local circumstances were not always reflected. The Head of Social Services for Children said that it appeared that deprivation areas which butted the county boundary may not have been considered as a possible collaborative project.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the proposals for the expansion of the Flying Start Programme in Flintshire be recommended to Cabinet for adoption; and
- (b) That a letter be sent from the Committee to Welsh Government to express their concerns about how the areas for expansion had been determined.

35. QUARTER 1 SERVICE PERFORMANCE REPORTS

The Director of Community Services introduced a report to request that the Committee consider the 2012/13 Quarter 1 service performance reports, note the update on the Strategic Assessment of Risks and Challenges (SARC) contained within the performance reports and note progress made against the Improvement Target Action Plans contained within the performance reports.

The Partnership Manager Health Social Care and Wellbeing Strategy explained that following a previous meeting of the Committee where the format of the reports had been criticised, a meeting had taken place with the Chair and the Business Performance Officer and an introduction had now been included in each of the performance reports.

Social Services for Adults

The Head of Social Services for Adults gave a short presentation on the performance within Social Services for Adults, outlining work which had

been undertaken to improve performance and areas where improvement was needed, as outlined within the report.

The Chair thanked the Head of Social Services for Adults for the excellent report which she welcomed and asked that her thanks be passed on to all of the staff within the team.

Councillor S. Jones felt that the reorganisation of the National Health Service should be included within the Risk and Challenges section of the report. The Director of Community Services agreed and explained that the Chief Executive was also looking at the corporate risk for the Authority. The Director agreed to a request from the Chair for a report of the Council's views on the proposed changes by Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board before the Special meeting of Flintshire County Council.

In response to a question from Councillor D.I. Mackie about Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG), the Partnership Manager Health Social Care and Wellbeing Strategy explained that a criterion to calculate the number of days had to be followed, but that work was continuing to reduce the number of days to complete a DFG. The Head of Social Services for Adults said that it was important to have a sustainable solution which could be managed on an ongoing basis. He added that this was one of his main priorities as the new Head of Adult Services.

On the issue of Social Enterprise, Councillor V. Gay asked if a catalogue of equipment had been developed. The Partnership Manager Health Social Care and Wellbeing Strategy said that it had been signed off and she would make enquiries and report back to Members. Councillor Gay also sought assurance that customer service training would be provided to those undertaking the DFG adaptations.

Social Services for Children

The Head of Social Services for Children gave a short presentation on the performance within Social Services for Children, outlining work which had been undertaken to improve performance and areas where improvement was needed, as outlined within the report.

The Chair asked that her congratulations for an excellent report be passed on and said that she felt that it contained several areas of good news such as the opening of Arosfa and the launch of the Access to Action card.

Following a question from Councillor M. Bateman on work with the Youth Justice Service, the Head of Social Services for Children said that she would provide an update report to Members in due course.

Development and Resources

The Head of Development and Resources gave a short presentation on the performance within Development and Resources, outlining work which

had been undertaken to improve performance and areas where improvement was needed, as outlined within the report.

The Chair also asked that her congratulations for the report be passed on to the staff in the team. Following a question from the Chair about how the service would be affected by the reduction to two localities areas by Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board, the Director of Community Services said that the three teams were now located within two hubs. The Partnership Manager Health Social Care and Wellbeing Strategy confirmed that there were still three localities leadership teams.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received.

36. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Learning and Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Facilitator introduced the report to consider the Forward Work Programme for the Committee.

She explained that a Forward Work Programme planning session had been held on 10 September 2012 and the suggested items had been included in the Programme for future meetings of the Committee. The Facilitator provided details of the issues to be considered at each meeting.

In referring to the 1 November 2012 meeting, the Head of Social Services for Children advised that questions and responses on the Children & Adolescent Mental Health Service, which were considered at a meeting of the Children's Services Forum, could be circulated to Members.

The Facilitator also advised that the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) annual letter was due to be received shortly and would need to be considered at a future meeting of the Committee.

Following a discussion, it was suggested that the item on 'Third Sector' be considered at a showcase session rather than at a Committee meeting; the Facilitator explained that she would make enquiries with the Flintshire Local Voluntary Council and would report back to Members.

The Chair referred to the Rota Visits training sessions which had taken place earlier in the week; the training provided had been excellent but the sessions had not been very well attended. Members were reminded that there was an expectation that Members of the Committee undertake Rota Visits and that further training sessions could be undertaken and a 'buddy' scheme set up so that Members who were more experienced in Rota Visits could accompany those who were new to Rota Visits.

The Facilitator advised Members that an All Member Welfare Reform workshop had been arranged for 31 October 2012. The items to be

scheduled included an update on the Restructure of Frontline Fieldwork, which the Facilitator indicated could be included at the 24 January 2013 meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the Forward Work Programme be received and amended to reflect the above suggestions.

37. DURATION OF MEETING

The meeting commenced at 2.00 p.m. and ended at 4.33 p.m.

38. MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS IN ATTENDANCE

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

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Chair