

SOCIAL AND HEALTH CARE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
17 DECEMBER 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 Monday 17 December 2012

PRESENT: Councillor C.A. Ellis (Chair)

Councillors: D. Evans, V. Gay, C. Hinds, R.B. Lloyd, M. Lowe, H.J. McGuill, D.I. Mackie, I. Smith and D.E. Wisinger

SUBSTITUTIONS:

Councillor G. Banks for Councillor S. Jones

APOLOGIES:

Councillors A. Davies-Cooke, P.J. Curtis, H.G. Roberts and M. Bateman
Head of Social Services for Children

CONTRIBUTORS:

Cabinet Member for Social Services, Director of Community Services, Head of Social Services for Adults, Service Manager, Resources, Management Information Officer

IN ATTENDANCE:

Learning and Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Facilitator and Committee Officer

46. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)

Councillor G. Banks declared an interest in item 7, Quarter 2 Service Reports, in relation to Disabled Facility Grants as he was currently employed by Care and Repair.

47. MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings held on 19 September 2012, 4 October 2012 and 1 November 2012 had been circulated to Members with the agenda.

MATTERS ARISING

19 September 2012

Councillor H.J. McGuill asked if the Betsi Cadwalladr University Hospital Board (BCUHB) had given feedback on the questions raised by members on page 8 of the Minutes of the meeting of 19 September 2012. The Chair said that feedback would be supplied when final decision was made known. She added that a special meeting would be convened with BCUHB in order to ask further questions.

4 October 2012

Councillor I. Smith asked for an update about start times of meetings as discussed on page 9 of the minutes. The Learning and Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Facilitator said that from May 2013, when the new meetings schedule was prepared, the meetings would alternate between a morning start and an afternoon start, in order to accommodate all members. She explained that a 1pm start was not a possibility, as a briefing meeting had to be accommodated in advance of the meeting.

Councillor H.J. McGuill referred to page 12 of the minutes and asked if further information relating to the North Wales Adoption Service was now available. The Resources Services Manager said that information that he had requested from NWAS was yet to be received. He said that a full report would be prepared once in receipt of all required information. The Learning and Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Facilitator said that this could be submitted at a future meeting as an information report, and any issues that arose as a result, could be explored further.

1 November 2012

The Chair asked the Head of Community Services for an update on The North Wales (draft) Information and Consultation Carers Strategy (page 22) of the minutes. The Head of Community Services said that as yet there had been no response from the Welsh Government.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of 19 September, 4 October and 1 November 2012 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

48. FOSTERING INSPECTION 2012

The Service Manager, Resources presented the report which outlined the outcomes from the CSSIW inspection conducted for the period 2011-12.

In accordance with the Care Standards Act 2000, the CSSIW had undertaken an annual review of Flintshire County Council's Fostering Service. The primary focus was on quality of life and quality of care experienced by foster carers and children in placement, particularly kinship carers. The inspection was conducted in November 2011.

The Service Manager, Resources reported that the service had received a most favourable final report, published April 2012 which highlighted many strengths as well as some areas for improvement, which were attached to the report in the form of an Action Plan.

Councillor G. Banks congratulated Children's Services on the report and said that he was very pleased to see all actions on the Action Plan had been completed,

Councillor H.J. McGuill asked about the procedure for a parent who did not wish their ex-partner's family to act as kinship carers. The Service Manager, Resources said that the Local Authority would undergo legal proceedings to get the authority to act as a parent and to share parental responsibility with the birth parent.

RESOLVED:

That the committee accepts this report and subsequent action plan as significant and independent evidence of a well managed and organised service.

49. CSSIW ANNUAL LETTER:

The Director of Community Services introduced a report to present the Annual Council Performance Evaluation by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) on the performance of Social Services for 2011-12.

The report was very positive and said that solid progress had been made over the past year and that there had been improvement against a range of national performance indicators. In Adult Services, 17 out of 20 key targets had been met whilst Children's Services had performed well in securing improvement against a significant range of key indicators.

The Re-ablement service was praised for its increase in numbers of people able to access the service and the resulting proportion who no longer required ongoing support. Children's Services were praised for the way it involved and worked with Young People, and the Pride of Flintshire Awards was cited as an example.

Areas for development included Risk Management for Adult Protection, progress in the ability to provide more short-break overnight provision for children and young people with disabilities and progress in the reduction of time taken to deliver major and minor adaptations.

Councillor H.J. McGuill welcomed the report and asked if the Welsh Government would be offering further funding for older people's health, occupational therapy or social services, given the statement announced earlier in the week. The Head of Community Services said that the Welsh Government would not invest any extra funding in the next year and that Flintshire County Council would have to reconfigure its existing funding.

The Chair congratulated all staff in Adult and Children's Social Services for their efforts and for projects such as Extra Care, Arosfa and Identity Cards for Looked After Children and Young Carers. The Chair thanked the previous Social and Health Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee for their work over the past 4 years.

The Cabinet Member for Social Services endorsed what had already been said by the Chair. She said that the report was very good and she was proud of

the workforce and officers within the directorate. The Resources Services Manager was also congratulated for his earlier report.

RESOLVED:

That the Social and Health Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee receives this report and is satisfied that any management and performance issues raised in the report are being addressed.

50. UPDATE ON ADULT SOCIAL CARE TRANSPORT POLICY

The Head of Social Services for Adults introduced the final update report on the outcome of the transport policy,

In October 2011, Flintshire County Council introduced a fair and equitable Transport Policy for Social Services for Adults after a consultation process with stakeholders that ran from April to September 2011. A social worker had undertaken individual transport assessments for 420 people, 416 of which were completed. Under the new policy, 47% of people previously in receipt of transport remained eligible, 17% were joint funded and 36% of people were found to be no longer eligible for the service. All complaints had been resolved and there was one appeal outstanding with the Ombudsman.

In the previous year, £269,000 of savings had been made, and projected savings of £50,000 were expected in this year. Further savings were envisaged as the contract for the transport service was due to go out to tender and more efficient routes would be implemented.

The Chair asked the Head of Social Services for Adults to convey thanks to Suzie Lunt for all her work on the project, and the professional way in which it was managed on behalf of the Social and Health Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor D. I. Mackie asked if the cost of escorts had been considered during the consultations. The Head of Adult Social Services said that there had been a reduction in the number of escorts as some had taken retirement. Councillor Mackie asked if there had been an increase in traffic reported at the day centres as a result of the policy and if there had been a reduction in attendance. The Head of Social Services for Adults said that there was now a degree of flexibility in respect to start times at day centres to accommodate new transport arrangements, so this had not been an issue. There had been little or no reduction in attendance as a result of the policy. Councillor Mackie said that if assessments took place between June and September, and transport was withdrawn as a result, some people assessed in June would have had transport withdrawn immediately whilst people assessed in September would have continued to receive transport until then. The Head of Social Services for Adults said that the policy was implemented gradually and said in hindsight it may have been better to do all assessments first then implement policy. He said that service users were aware of the cut off date and understood how it was to be introduced.

Councillor B. Lloyd asked about the number of service users. The Director of Community Services said that 416 day care service users had been assessed. If some were in receipt of mobility payments, this was taken into account where appropriate. The current system of free transport for all was no longer sustainable. Some people made alternative arrangements with the use of mobility allowance.

Councillor M. Lowe asked about persons who would face financial hardship as a result of the policy. The Head of Social Services for Adults said that such persons could make a case to a panel set up to review such cases.

Councillor G. Banks asked if persons no longer in receipt of free transport could pay to use the transport service. The Head of Adult Social Services said that he had been advised by Legal Services that this was not appropriate. He said that the new, efficient routes would minimise spare spaces on the transport.

RESOLVED:

That members note this report as a final summary of the implementation of the transport policy.

51. QUARTER 2 SERVICE PERFORMANCE REPORTS

Adult Social Services

The Head of Adult Social Services introduced the Adult Social Services report and highlighted the ongoing work to achieve the efficiency savings of £1.2 million for 2012-13.

There had been a decline in performance in the time taken to deliver a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) in the second quarter, down to 422 days from 393 days in the first quarter. Information leaflets about low level works were being circulated to customers. In terms of risk, Disabled Facility Grants were on amber. In the case of low level adaptations, a workman from Wales and West had recently been employed to carry out such works.

Councillor D. Evans said that he would like to see a breakdown of the levels of work required under DFG, such as works to the value of £10,000 to £50,000. The Head of Social Services for Adults said that this level of detail would be added into the next quarter report, with the agreement of the Overview and Scrutiny Facilitator.

The Chair said that the idea for a workman in a van to conduct low level adaptations had originated from a member workshop. Councillor H.J. McGuill said Age Concern operated a similar service.

Children's Services

The Performance Officer introduced the Children's Service report and said that all 7 improvement targets had been met in quarter 2.

The joint project with Barnados which involved young carers had carried out all the required assessments and all of the young people were in receipt of a service.

Performance in the timeliness of statutory visits for looked after children were slightly below that of last quarter, as was the timeliness of Children in Need reviews. This was attributed to the impact of the implementation of the Transition Team; the transfer of cases from the Children's Integrated Disability Service to Transition had led to some delays in the completion of reviews and visits. Reviews and visits were now back on track now that the department was fully staffed.

The Chair asked if figures for Children in Need, such as numbers assessed and waiting for a social worker could be provided. The Director of Community Services said that these figures could be collated for the committee.

Development and Resources

The Director of Community Services introduced the Development and Resources Report in place of the Head of Development and Resources and said that there had been progress with the improvement plan in terms care fees methodology, extra care expansion, the development of new Supporting People services to strengthen homeless prevention. These areas currently held green RAG status. The review of the charging policy for social services and housing related support was ongoing and showed amber RAG status.

In terms of the Strategic Risks and Challenges (SARC), CL07, The Relationship with local health board and impacts on public and primary health was on red RAG status, in light of the health reforms.

The Director of Community Services informed the committee that Alan Butterworth would take retirement in the New Year, before the next committee meeting. He formally acknowledged, as Director, the huge contribution which had been made by Alan Butterworth over the years to Community Services and conveyed his thanks for all his efforts. The Chair asked that the Overview and Scrutiny Facilitator write to Alan Butterworth to convey thanks on behalf of the committee for his contribution to Community Services.

The Chair proposed that the budget variances shown on page 103, be examined more closely by the committee. The budget variances related to local teams, vacancy management, family placement and professional support.

RESOLVED:-

- (a) That the committee consider the 2012/13 Quarter 2 performance reports produced by the Heads of Service;
- (b) That a breakdown of the costs of the Disabled Facilities Grant be provided in the Quarter 3 report;
- (c) That figures for Children in Need, such as numbers assessed and waiting for a social worker should be provided as part of the next quarterly report;
- (d) That the Learning and Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Facilitator write to Alan Butterworth to convey thanks on behalf of the committee for his contribution to Community Services; and
- (e) That the Committee was satisfied with the budget variances shown on page 103.

52. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

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

In referring to the next meeting on 24 January 2013, the Learning and Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Facilitator asked if members could be nominated to serve on a task group for the Integrated Family Support Service.

The Learning and Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Facilitator suggested that a Carer's Strategy update and Youth Justice Service update be added to the forward work programme.

The Chair asked if officer name plates could be produced for the next meeting so that members were aware of officers who may attend in substitution for their line manager.

The Learning and Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Facilitator said that a task and finish group would be continued in the New Year to consider the Annual Council reporting frameworks.

The Chair closed the meeting by wishing all members of the committee and officers a Happy Christmas and Prosperous New Year.

RESOLVED:

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

53. DURATION OF MEETING

The meeting commenced at 2.00 pm and ended at 3.16 pm.

54. MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS IN ATTENDANCE

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

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Chair