

SOCIAL & HEALTH CARE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
20 MARCH 2014

Minutes of the meeting of the Social & Health Care Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held at Delyn Committee Room, County Hall, Mold CH7 6NA on Thursday, 20 March 2014

PRESENT: Councillor Cindy Hinds (Vice-Chair in the Chair)

Councillors: Marion Bateman, Andy Dunbobbin, Veronica Gay, Stella Jones, Brian Lloyd, Mike Lowe, Hilary McGuill, Dave Mackie, Ian Smith and David Wisinger

APOLOGIES:

Councillors: Carol Ellis and Hilary Isherwood

CONTRIBUTORS:

Cabinet Member for Social Services, Director of Community Services, Head of Adults Services, Head of Children's Services, Senior Manager: Commissioning and Performance

IN ATTENDANCE:

Environment and Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Facilitator and Committee Officer

56. ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES

The Director of Community Services congratulated Alwyn Jones, the Head of Adults Services on his recent appointment as Head of Adult Services and Business Services at Isle of Anglesey County Council from June 2014. He acknowledged the significant contribution that the Head of Adults Services had made to Flintshire County Council and welcomed the fact that he would be staying in the regional network.

57. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)

Councillor Hilary McGuill declared a personal interest in the agenda item 3 (Minutes) due to a relative being in Deeside Hospital.

58. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 13 February 2014 had been circulated to Members with the agenda.

Accuracy

The Chair advised that she had submitted an apology which had not been recorded.

Matters Arising

The Environment and Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Facilitator referred to minute 50 on Enhanced Care at Home and read out a statement from

Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB) about the temporary closure of Gladstone Ward due to difficulties in staffing levels because of retirements, long-term sickness and some staff being on restricted duties, and the work that was being undertaken during this period. Councillor Stella Jones raised concern about other wards or facilities that had been temporarily closed by BCUHB that had never re-opened. Councillor Hilary McGuill provided assurance that BCUHB were undertaking the work that had been reported but said that her main concern was the level of staffing at the hospital. Councillor Marion Bateman felt that this was a concern in all hospitals.

The Facilitator also referred to minute 53 on Rota Visits and advised that an email had been sent to the Committee Members by Nicky Slater advising them that rota visits needed to be completed by 31 March 2014 and that they should advise her if this would be problem.

A Task Group to consider the Annual Council Reporting Framework, as referred to in the resolution to minute number 54, was due to meet on 14 April 2014 and the Environment and Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Facilitator advised that other Members could join the Group if they wished.

RESOLVED:

That subject to the suggested amendment, the minutes be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

59. IMPROVEMENT PLAN MONITORING REPORT

The Director of Community Services introduced a report for the Committee to note and consider elements of the 2013/14 Mid Year Improvement Plan Monitoring Report relevant to this Committee for the period October to December 2013. The Director of Community Services invited the Head of Adults Services to report on the Improvement Plan sub-priority reports on Independent Living and Integrated Community Social and Health Services which were appended to the report.

Councillor Stella Jones referred to the target of 300 days for delivery of a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) and asked for a breakdown of how the figure was calculated. The Head of Adults Services advised that a breakdown could be provided but explained that the wait for an occupational therapy assessment would be no more than three months. Once a decision had been made, then discussions would begin with partners in Housing on the scoping and level of work required. In response to a further question from Councillor Jones about the short amount of time required to provide a stairlift if it was privately funded, the Head of Adults Services said that DFGs were generally for more significant changes to properties, some of which would require planning permission, and that the provision of a stairlift fell below the DFG boundary.

The Director of Community Services explained that the three steps in the process were:-

1. Waiting for an Occupational Therapist assessment
2. A decision on whether the adaptation was appropriate

3. Ordering the necessary equipment and implementing it.

The Director of Community Services advised that time for an occupational therapist assessment had reduced significantly and those with high priority would be assessed immediately, medium priority would be assessed within a month and the maximum wait for low priority was three months with the average waiting time being six weeks. Self assessment to identify the need for small pieces of equipment and minor adaptations was introduced in April 2013 and offered a fast track service for people who had low level needs which could be met without the need for a face to face assessment. He added that the Social and Health Care Overview & Scrutiny committee had been instrumental in the introduction of self-assessment. In the first six months, 97 referrals were received for self assessment and of those that resulted in an intervention, 72% were provided with equipment or a minor adaptation without the need for a home visit. In response to a query from Councillor Jones about the number of referrals to occupational therapy per month and following a question from Councillor Andy Dunbobbin about the number of children and adults who had applied for DFGs, the Director of Community Services and Head of Children's Services advised that they could provide the requested information following the meeting.

Following a question from Councillor McGuill about the provision of wellbeing services at Llys Eleanor for patients with dementia, the Head of Adults Services advised that work still needed to be undertaken in this area and that a bid had been submitted to allow the use of extra care units for provision of wellbeing services. The Cabinet Member for Social Services also spoke of the development of a dementia café in Llys Eleanor and the provision of dementia friendly communities. She added that Mold was hoping to become the first dementia friendly community in North Wales.

In referring to the section on the prevention of homelessness, Councillor McGuill referred to a recent meeting of the Children's Services Forum and the concerns that had been raised about the lack of provision of accommodation for young care leavers in areas outside of Flintshire. The Head of Children's Services advised that she had spoken with the Community Support Services Manager about the comments made but added that it was about a balance between appropriate accommodation and setting realistic expectations and also about ensuring that the appropriate support was in place.

Councillor McGuill asked whether the use of technology was being explored to allow for greater independence and in response the Head of Adults Services spoke of the work that was being undertaken about the greater use of Telecare. In response to a question from Councillor McGuill about whether all of the General Practitioners in Holywell were now referring patients into the Enhanced Care Service, the Head of Adults Services said that not all Holywell GPs were signed up yet but that the Locality Lead could be encouraged to consider the issue. Councillor McGuill also commented on the seamless links from the Staffordshire County Council website to Health, Police and other services. In response, the Director of Community Services said that a review of the Council's website was to be undertaken following a recent survey which had produced mixed results and he advised that he would pass on the details to the Head of ICT and Customer Services as an example of good practice.

In response to a question from Councillor David Wisinger about whether equipment such as wheelchairs and stairlifts were recycled once they were no longer needed, the Head of Adults Services said that every effort was made to recycle equipment where appropriate and explained that equipment provided through Flintshire County Council should include details of where it could be returned to when it was no longer needed. Councillor Wisinger also commented on agency staff and raised concern about possible gaps in training. The Head of Adults Services responded that all agency staff should be trained to a basic level of reading and communication and that Members should provide details if they felt that there was evidence that this was not being achieved.

Councillor Marion Bateman asked how many Occupational Therapists (OTs) the Council employed and how many were agency staff and she asked whether it was the intention to increase the numbers. The Head of Adults Services advised that OTs were based in each locality team and there was also some assistant OT capacity but there were currently no plans to increase the numbers, however the position would be monitored. He added that there had been a reliance on agency OT staff in the past but none were currently being used. Councillor Bateman raised concern about the length of waiting time for an OT assessment and the Head of Adults Services detailed the average times for assessments and the work that was undertaken once the assessment had been completed. He also spoke of the work which had been undertaken with partners to reduce the waiting times in the provision of DFGs but said that there was still more work to be done. The Chair asked whether funding was a problem and the Director of Community Services responded that there was a need to ensure that the appropriate level of capital funding and staffing were in place and he spoke of the self assessment service which reduced the need for a home visit for some users.

Councillor Jones requested that the heading on page 17 about homelessness be amended and asked what problems were encountered when re-housing drug or alcohol dependent people into communities. In referring to training of agency staff, Councillor Jones sought assurance that appropriate training was in place and said that it was important for the service to know what training had been undertaken by agency staff. The Director of Community Services advised that the wording in the heading could be reconsidered and spoke of the sensitivities around re-housing people into communities but added that there was a need to provide support. On the issue of agency staff, he said that there were standards which the service would expect agencies to follow when providing staff and asked the Committee to provide details of examples where they felt that this had not been achieved. The Head of Children's Services spoke of the regular monitoring which had been undertaken in Children's Services to ensure that issues which had occurred in the past did not reoccur.

The Environment and Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Facilitator asked a question on behalf of Councillor Hilary Isherwood who had not been able to attend this meeting on the decision to close the Hearing Aid Clinic at Deeside from April 2014. As other Members were not aware of the decision, the Facilitator stated that she would make enquiries and would advise the Committee of the response.

In response to a question from the Chair about the use of direct payments and Learning Disability Services, the Head of Adults Services said that direct payments would help to provide support for greater independence. Councillor McGuill queried whether users could use direct payments to purchase equipment for themselves. The Director of Community Services confirmed that they could and that he would provide information to the Committee following the meeting about what direct payments could or could not be used for.

Following a suggestion from Councillor Jones that an Improvement Plan Progress be reviewed in three months, the Environment and Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Facilitator suggested that the reporting remain at the current six monthly intervals with the usual performance reports being submitted to Committee every three months.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

60. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

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

The Facilitator detailed the items scheduled to be considered at the meetings of the Committee on 1 May 2014, 12 June 2014 and 3 July 2014 and explained that it had been suggested by the Director of Community Services that an Update on the Social Services Bill also be submitted to the 12 June 2014 meeting. She added that an update on Rota Visits would also need to be considered at a future meeting.

Councillor Hilary McGuill suggested, following earlier discussions, that reports on the following also be considered at future meetings of the Committee:-

- Agency Staff training
- Seamless working with partner agencies from a client point of view
- Working with technologies to assist users

Councillor Marion Bateman requested further information on Occupational Therapist service and suggested that a General Practitioner Lead be invited to attend a future meeting. The Head of Children's Services advised that an inspection of Children's Services was due to be undertaken shortly and she suggested that a report following the inspection be considered by the Committee when it was available.

RESOLVED:

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

61. **MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE**

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

(The meeting started at 2.00 pm and ended at 3.18 pm)

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Chairman