

**FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**REPORT TO:**        **JOINT LIFELONG LEARNING AND SOCIAL & HEALTH CARE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**DATE:**                **FRIDAY, 2 MAY 2014**

**REPORT BY:**        **DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES**

**SUBJECT:**            **VISUAL IMPAIRMENT SUPPORT TO CHILDREN & ADULTS IN FLINTSHIRE**

**1.00    PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.01    To provide council members with information regarding current provision of support to children and adults with a visual impairment in Flintshire.

**2.00    BACKGROUND**

2.01    This information report was requested by members during a recent scrutiny meeting.

**3.00    CONSIDERATIONS**

**Services to Children**

3.01    Flintshire County Council provides support through the *North East Wales Sensory Support Service* to children and young people across the counties of Wrexham, Denbighshire and Flintshire.

3.02    The service aims to promote equality of opportunity for children and young people with a sensory loss and works in partnership with parents, schools and other professionals to ensure children and young people with a vision or hearing loss have full access to the curriculum and achieve their potential from diagnosis through to the point that the individual leaves school-based education.

3.03    The service aims to ensure that all children and young people with a sensory loss are provided with appropriate support which will maximise their educational potential and independence and works in partnership with others to ensure that the needs of children and young people with a sensory loss are fully met, taking into account the views of parents/carers and family where appropriate.

3.04    The service works seamlessly with other educational services, Children's Services, Health and 3<sup>rd</sup> Sector organisations, to support the needs of children and young people. Representation and

involvement with the following facilitate effective partnership working:-

- Children and young people's Integrated Disability Service (CIDS) referral panel
- Home Advisory Service
- Health Consultants
- RNIB officers
- Inclusion Support Services

3.05 The service seeks to foster good working relationships with parents of pre-school children in order that early intervention will initiate a shared responsibility for the holistic needs of the child. Regular home visits which may involve emotional support for the family, educational advice and mobility training.

3.06 For school aged pupils the aim of the service is to assess the needs of individual pupils and to suggest strategies to promote learning. A range of assessment will be provided by the service and will concentrate on functional vision and the impact of the sensory loss on their learning.

3.07 Sensory support staff provide direct teaching to school aged children and young people in specialist skills and curriculum areas, e.g. touch typing, Braille, mobility and independent use of specialist equipment as appropriate to individual need.

### **Referral Process for Children**

3.08 The service assists schools and other agencies to identify as early as possible the particular needs of children and young people with sensory difficulties and provide appropriate advice, support and provision for them.

3.09 The service operates an open referral policy where any concerned parties can refer children and young people to the service. However, where a child has a significant sensory impairment the referral will normally come from health professionals.

3.10 Bilingual support through the medium of Welsh is available for sensory impaired pupils, families and schools. Bilingual reports are made available as required along with the translation of any documentation into Welsh.

### **Criteria for involvement**

3.11 Specialist input can be provided if the young person has a medical diagnosis of sensory deficit or such a diagnosis is believed to be likely or imminent.

3.12 A nationally agreed eligibility criteria is used across the service to

ensure equality of provision for learners. This informs the identification of the level and nature of the support required along with the appropriate levels of staffing. It also provides a clear entry and exit criteria.

### **Services for Adults**

- 3.13 From an Adults Services perspective we have a Service Level Agreement in place with Vision Support to provide assistance to adults referred. Vision Support are considered to be a specialist provider in this field.
- 3.14 In addition to working with people with a sight impairment the service also works closely with visually impaired people who have additional complex needs such as dual sensory loss, learning, physical and mental health disabilities.
- 3.15 In order to provide a comprehensive service Vision Support provide staff who work alongside our intake team at County Hall and manage all referrals received.

### **Referral Process for Adults**

- A referral is received for support from our first contact team; this can come via a GP or other health professional or from individuals themselves.
  - The team then undertake a specialist assessment to identify individual's needs and aspirations. As part of this assessment we promote independent living.
  - As part of the assessment, risks to the individual are considered as well as their daily living skills. Based on the assessment daily living skills training is provided which may include the teaching of new skills or adapted practice in home management, employment and leisure.
  - Depending on the assessment of need the service will also support / teach indoor and outdoor mobility skills. This includes training with both guide cane and learning long cane techniques, orientation and route planning.
- 3.16 In addition the team will support a person to register their sight impairment and sign post people as appropriate to other parties including the health service, education service, welfare and employment services, and the RNIB who do offer welfare benefits and transition information.
  - 3.17 The Service also works closely with local opticians who provide information, and can issue low vision aids in accordance with the

Welsh Government Low Vision Services.

3.18 Where necessary the service also recommends minor works of adaptation to an individual's home as highlighted in the specialist assessment to support their day to day living.

3.19 Central to the work of the rehabilitation workers is that they try to understand the psychological aspects of sight loss and provide emotional support as part of the rehabilitation process. This includes working closely with the individual their family and carers.

#### **4.00 RECOMMENDATIONS**

4.01 That members support the continued provision of services to those with a visual impairment within Flintshire as noted within this report

#### **5.00 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.01 Current services provided to children and adults with a visual impairment are met from within budgets across education and adults services respectively.

#### **6.00 ANTI POVERTY IMPACT**

6.01 Not applicable

#### **7.00 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT**

7.01 Not applicable

#### **8.00 EQUALITIES IMPACT**

8.01 This is specialist support provided to individuals with a sight impairment.

#### **9.00 PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

9.01 None

#### **10.00 CONSULTATION REQUIRED**

10.01 Not applicable

#### **11.00 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN**

11.01 Not applicable

#### **12.00 APPENDICES**

None

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT) 1985**  
**BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

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