

SOCIAL & HEALTH CARE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
1 JULY, 2021

Minutes of the meeting of the Social & Health Care Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held remotely on Thursday 1 July 2021

PRESENT: Councillor Hilary McGuill (Chair)

Councillors: Mike Allport, Marion Bateman, Paul Cunningham, Jean Davies, Carol Ellis, Gladys Healey, Mike Lowe, Dave Mackie and David Wisinger

SUBSTITUTIONS: Councillor Sean Bibby (for Cindy Hinds) and Councillor Geoff Collett (for Michelle Perfect)

CONTRIBUTORS: Councillor Christine Jones (Deputy Leader for Partnerships and Cabinet Member for Social Services); Chief Officer (Social Services); Senior Manager – Integrated Services and Lead Adults, Senior Manager – Children and Workforce; ADM and TSS Programme Manager; Early Years and Family Support Service Manager; Marketing and Recruitment Officer; Senior Manager – Safeguarding and Commissioning; Strategic Policy Advisor and Benefits Manager

IN ATTENDANCE: Social Care and Environment Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator; Community and Education Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator and Democratic Services Officer.

13. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING)

None were received.

14. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 May 2021 were approved and moved by Councillor Wisinger and seconded by Councillor Lowe.

Councillors Gladys Healey asked if a reply had been received from Welsh Government regarding Mental Health Services. The Facilitator advised that a holding response had been received.

RESOLVED:

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

15. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME AND ACTION TRACKING

The Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator presented the current Forward Work Programme. She advised that an item on Children Services Transformation would be added to the meeting on 9th September and that they were waiting for confirmation from Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board as to whether they were able to attend the meeting on 4th November. She also added that two reports had come forward for the meeting on 9 December being Direct Payments Update and Extra Care Update Report and invited Members to get in touch if they had any items that they wanted to add to future agendas.

The Facilitator refereed to the action tracking report and advised members that they were waiting for a letter from BCUHB regarding lack of face to face GP appointments and Long Covid. Also that no feedback had been received from the Children's Services Forum as they had not met since the last meeting. The Senior Manager – Children and Workforce advised that they wanted to meet the Children first so they could decide on the key points they wanted to bring to the Forum.

The recommendations in the report were moved by Councillor Wisinger and seconded by Councillor Lowe.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Forward Work Programme be noted;
- (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.

16. SOCIAL SERVICES DIRECTOR'S ANNUAL REPORT

The Chief Officer (Social Services) advised that he and the Cabinet Member produced the Annual Report which was a statutory requirement to review the services in 2020/21 and the year ahead. He pointed out that as it was the Chief Executive's last year it was fitting for him to write the introduction leaving behind him a fantastic legacy of support for Social Services. He went through the main issues of the report and praised Double Click – Mental Health Social Enterprise for the work they had done in producing the report which the Committee agreed with. The ADM and TSS Programme Manager added that this report had been through the design process with Double Click and welcomed any comments from the Committee before it was finalised.

The Deputy Leader for Partnerships and Cabinet Member for Social Services said that to get so much achieved in such a difficult time was evidence to how wonderful the service was and that this Annual report stands out as one of the best reports due to the difficult circumstances.

Councillor Wisinger wanted clarification about the Queensferry GP Surgery being moved to Connah's Quay and asked what impact it could have on elderly residents.

Councillor Mackie advised that this had been referred to the Community Health Council and that the move to Connah's Quay was an option but there were other options within the proposal which were more local. He reported that he did not favour Connah's Quay as patients would have to pass another surgery in order to get to Connah's Quay Health Centre. He believed that it was going to be raised with Queensferry Community Council. He would keep the Committee informed about any progress updates he gets through the CHC.

Councillor Davies reported about ongoing problems with the Connah's Quay Medical Centre. Also St. Marks Surgery didn't have any Doctors in one day and all appointments were cancelled.

Transport links were a concern for Councillor Cunningham and Councillor Healey was concerned about why there was a shortage of GP's and why they couldn't be recruited.

The Committee agreed with the Chairman that a letter should be written to the Health Board with all the concerns raised at the meeting. The Chief Officer (Social Services) advised that the letter should be sent to the Area Director of the Health Board – Rob Smith and The Director of Primary Care Services - Gareth Bowdler and that he was happy to assist the Facilitator with the writing of it.

The recommendations in the report were moved by Councillor Gladys Healey and seconded by Councillor Mike Lowe.

RESOLVED:

That the final report, which includes the key developments of the past year and priorities for next year, be approved.

17. EARLY YEARS

The Early Years and Family Support Service Manager shared a short video showing the progress to date of some of the capital work that had happened around Flintshire for the 3 to 4 Year Old Funded Childcare Offer and some of the Flying Start Capital Funding that had been received from Welsh Government.

The Chairman asked how we reached out to families where English was not their first language particularly Eastern Europeans who may not have family here to support them with childcare to enable them to work. The Early Years and Family Support Service Manager advised that the large capital schemes were primarily for 3 to 4 year old Funded Childcare which supported working parents, and children funded through the Childcare Offer. However, if places are available the childcare places could be made available to other ages of children based upon the Settings CIW registration. Welsh Government may change the Childcare Offer eligibility criteria in the future to include parents in training which would widen the scope. As for Early Entitlement places these were linked with childcare and education which were opened out to anyone who was interested. Childcare would be registered in the usual way for people to apply and the demographic was monitored to see who was making use of the facilities.

Councillor Mackie congratulated the Early Years and Family Support Service Manager on an excellent report as it had so much information covered in each paragraph in section one and that each paragraph could have been a separate report for this Committee he also added that appendix was simple to read and understand.

Councillor Bateman reported that the progress on the new building at Ysgol Sychdyn was progressing well.

The recommendations in the report were moved by Councillor Wisinger and seconded by Councillor Healey.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Committee support the approach to Early Years and Family Support provision, and collaborations with key partners, and future development of an Early Years Strategy;
- (b) That the progress and impact being achieved through Welsh Government capital funding be noted;
- (c) That the Committee support the development of programmes with a strong evidence base of impact and cost effectiveness when commissioning early years and early intervention services. And that the council and partners continue to develop its own local evidence base to support positive early intervention; and
- (d) That the Committee support the refresh of the Parenting in Flintshire Parenting Programmes Framework, and support action being taken to raise awareness and the benefits of parenting programmes with key partners so that there is an increase in accessibility and availability of programmes that meet parent's needs.

18. CHILDCARE SUFFICIENCY ASSESSMENT

Due to the overlap this item was included in the previous presentation for Early Years and the Early Years and Family Support Service Manager explained that the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment which was a statutory report was refreshed each year and a full report would be available next year.

Councillor Mackie gave mention to the gain of 27 registered childcare places compared with the end of last year due to the injection into the grants.

The recommendations in the report were moved by Councillor Wisinger and seconded by Councillor Healey.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the report be noted; and
- (b) That the Committee support the on-going work and commitment to the delivery of the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment every five years and the annual Progress Report.

19. DISABILITY AND DISRIMINATION

The Strategic Policy Advisor introduced the report which provided an overview of disability discrimination. She outline the activity underway to

promote equality for disabled people regarding the following issues which had been previously raised by the Committee:-

- Reassurance that no discrimination takes place for housing, job and education aspects of life, both for seen and unseen disabilities;
- Reluctance to help older disabled people;
- Transport;
- Disabled Facilities Grants.

The Chairman confirmed that the comments made by the Strategic Policy Advisor about the closure of the Queensferry surgery would be included in the letter to Betsi Cadwaladr.

Councillor Mackie stated that these inequalities were becoming a requirement and shouldn't be restricted. Decision makers should take them into consideration at the planning stages and show evidence that all steps have been taken into consideration to reduce them.

Councillor Wisinger added that with disability in mind when developers were building new big developments then they should put forward new Doctors Surgeries at the planning stage to accommodate the extra people as many surgeries were outdated and at capacity. Councillor Mackie agreed and said that he raised it at a CHC meeting that he attended and advised the Committee that there would be a consultation with all patients for them to put their comments forward.

Councillor Bateman shared with the Committee that when a new development was being built in Sychdyn it was requested that 4 affordable houses were bungalows due to the lack of new housing for disabled people. These were gifted by the Developer. She also suggested that, when able to, the Committee should walk around Town Centres to experience the everyday problems that a disabled person has to contend with. The Chief Officer (Social Services) agreed that this was an excellent idea.

The Deputy Leader for Partnerships and Cabinet Member for Social Services advised the Committee that they had been pushing for this to be included in planning policy for future town regeneration programmes to have facilities for everyone with disabilities.

Councillor Healy stated that there was a percentage of people that do not declare that they are disabled because the pay was not equal in response the Strategic Policy Advisor confirmed that HR were working with employees to encourage them to fill in their equality monitoring data on iTrent which would enable them to complete Equal Pay audits. The Chief Officer (Social Services) added that the Project Search Development was a small but important part of this to address access to work for people with disabilities and were currently looking for placements within the Council for Project Search Students.

The recommendations in the report were moved by Councillor Lowe and seconded by Councillor Davies.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the actions being taken to eliminate discrimination and promote Equality for disabled people be noted; and
- (b) That the Committee receive the Strategic Equality Plan annual report 2020/21 prior to approval by Cabinet.

20. END OF YEAR PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT

The Chief Officer (Social Services) introduced the new revised format report and he stated that the monitoring of the services was mainly positive but had been a challenging year and the delivery of some services had not met their targets but that both Adult and Children's Services had been very resilient and provided very good levels of service given the circumstances of the pandemic.

The Senior Manager – Children and Workforce expanded on the indicator of children who had been reported to have run away he explained that Flintshire now have a dedicated worker who meets with the young people to find out where they have been and what they have been doing and puts a risk management plan around the individual child. It also helps build a picture as to where they are congregating together and where appropriate intelligence is shared with the Police. The indicator shows that just under 75% of children had had an interview and data is now being collected to show those who had been offered an interview but declined to give a better indication.

In response to issues raised by Councillor Ellis the Senior Manager – Children and Workforce explained that they had continued to recruit Foster Carers through the pandemic and targets would have been met but this was down to timing issues with the Panel meeting in April. If the Panel had met in March targets would have been met.

He explained that in relation to the Family Group Meetings demand grew during the pandemic - the target was to support 280 families and 382 families were actually supported. Due to the increase in demand work had been done to expand the service.

Child Protection was showing amber due to the fact that they were 1% away from target. The Senior Manager – Safeguarding and Commissioning added that they were at 94.14% and the target was 95% and that quarter 3 coincided with the Christmas period which can be a challenging time to contact families and the Chief Officer (Social Services) responded to the final issue she raised concerning the issues on a downward trend reporting that this was partly due to the additional pressures on the services due to the pandemic but performances need to be maintained and they cannot use this as a reason for everything.

Councillor Healey questioned if the 75% of runaways were the ones that came back. The Senior Manager – Children and Workforce confirmed that all runaways return but have to be classed as missing if they don't return at certain times even though their whereabouts is known. 75% of them accept an interview to talk about where they have been, the risks they might have been

subjected to and the importance of sticking to boundaries. The other 25% are the ones that decline the interview.

The Chief Officer (Social Services) said that he would feed back the comments to the Team that Councillor Mackie made about the ease to follow report and the Committees thanks to the SPOA Team in respect to how they dealt with the significant increase in demand to service.

The recommendation in the report was moved by Councillor Healey and seconded by Councillor Ellis

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

21. JOINT FUNDED CARE PACKAGES

The Senior Manager – Safeguarding and Commissioning introduced the report outlining how the funding was split and the work that had been done to support Joint Funded Care Packages.

In response to a question raised by Councillor Ellis the Senior Manager – Integrated Services and Lead Adults advised that no people were waiting in hospital for a care package unless they needed treatment. In terms of any Continuing Health Care (CHC) disputes or agreements for funding within in the 2014 Framework it incumbents on Social Services and Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board who agree a placement or care and support at home and then the dispute process kicks in but the individual wasn't waiting in hospital. CHC Funding was across board and Adult Services were quite successful with the funding but Children's Services was an ongoing challenge. The Senior Manager – Safeguarding and Commissioning advised that there were currently 153 cases with delayed invoices of which 50 were over 60 days overdue.

The recommendations in the report were moved by Councillor Cunningham and seconded by Councillor Lowe.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Committee is assured of the robust and proactive budget management approach Flintshire County Council takes to ensure joint funded care packages are financially well managed; and
- (b) That the plan to introduce a CHC Monitoring Officer post, supported by 'Invest to Save' funding be noted.

22. COMMENCEMENT OF THE SOCIOECONOMIC DUTY

The Strategic Policy Advisor and Benefits Manager gave a joint presentation on the Council's preparations for the commencement of the Socio-Economic Duty. This was a statutory requirement upon relevant public bodies to have due regard to the need to reduce inequalities of outcomes resulting from socio-economic disadvantage.

The presentation covering the following:

- What is the Socio-economic Duty and what does it do?
- Key terms
- Inequalities of outcomes
- Examples of poverty
- Demonstrating due regard - audit trail
- Meeting the duty - what we are doing
- Better outcomes
- Case study
- Applying the Duty
- After the Duty

The presentation highlighted the broader examples of poverty which linked to one of the priorities within the Council Plan. The report was being shared with all Overview & Scrutiny Committees to raise awareness of the new obligations. Amongst the actions, the inclusion of Integrated Impact Assessment outcomes on committee reports would help to demonstrate consideration of potential impacts of poverty in strategic decision-making.

The Chairman asked what the Council was doing about Children who received free school meals that were having to self-isolate due to a member of their pod testing positive sometimes on multiple occasions. The Benefits Manager confirmed that due to all the work they did during lockdown last year on direct payments to families and championing with Welsh Government the need to pay the free school meal allowance during the school holidays has enabled them to make direct payments to the families when a child has to self-isolate.

In response to a comment Councillor Bateman raised on digital poverty the Strategic Policy Advisor said that as part of the Council Pan they were looking at developing Champions who would go with devices and support people getting online. The Benefits Manager added that in the interim Connects Staff were able to scan and email documents and also complete forms electronically on their behalf.

The recommendations in the report were moved by Councillor Bateman and seconded by Councillor Cunningham.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the requirements of the Socio-economic Duty be noted; and
- (b) That the Committee is assured of the Council's preparedness in meeting the new duty

23. LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985 – TO CONSIDER THE EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED:

That the press and public be excluded for the remainder of the meeting for the following item by virtue of exempt information under paragraph(s) 14 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

**24. CORPORATE PARENTING AND FOSTERING STRATEGY UPDATE
(VERBAL ITEM)**

The Marketing and Recruitment Officer shared some news on a National Initiative to improve Foster Care Recruitment for Local Authorities due to be launched mid-July. She explained background to Fostering and the difference between Local Authority Fostering and Businesses advertising for Foster Carers for profit making organisations.

The Senior Manager – Children and Workforce advised that today was just to make members aware that an announce was going to be made in mid-July and that The Marketing and Recruitment Officer would come back and give a presentation once it had gone live.

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted.

25. MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS IN ATTENDANCE

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

(The meeting started at 10.00 am and ended at 12.16 pm)

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Chair