

SOCIAL AND HEALTH CARE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Thursday 2 nd March, 2023
Report Subject	Flintshire Micro-Care Project
Cabinet Member	Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Social Services and Wellbeing
Report Author	Chief Officer (Social Services)
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Flintshire Micro-Care Pilot, funded through Foundational Economy, Cadwyn Clwyd, and Flintshire County Council was a groundbreaking pilot scheme within Wales that supported small enterprises (no more than 6 employees) or sole traders to deliver direct personal care and wider wellbeing services in Flintshire. The projects objectives were to;

- Strengthen the care market and to raise the profile of care as a career choice.
- Bring new people into the care sector or bring back those that had left it
- Develop local bespoke person-centred care solutions across the county
- Expand choice for people looking for care or well-being services
- Help micro-carers to set up and build sustainable businesses
- Create new employment opportunities

Following the successful completion of the pilot project, the council was successful in obtaining additional funding through the Welsh Government Foundational Economy Challenge Fund to enable Micro-Care to be developed into an established service offer within Flintshire.

This report will highlight the current status of Micro-Care in Flintshire and give an overview of the stages to become a Micro-Carer.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	To provide an update for members on the Micro-Care project in Flintshire and to give an understanding of the process to become a Micro-Carer.
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REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE MICRO- CARE PROJECT IN FLINTSHIRE
1.01	<p>There are now 30 active Micro-Carers in Flintshire which has grown from 24 at the start of the financial year. During that time there have been an additional 8 enterprises established with 2 enterprises having ceased trading, either due to personal reasons or to pursue an alternative career option. The vast majority (25) of these businesses offer direct care as well as well-being services.</p> <p>We have processed 21 enquiries to become a Micro-Carer since the start of January 2023 and are actively working with 7 of these to establish them as Micro-Care enterprises. 14 of the 21 enquiries are from people not currently working in a care role, and 4 out of 7 of the people being worked with currently are male, demonstrating Micro-Care's efficiency in attracting a demographic who had not previously considered a career in care.</p>
1.02	<p>Quarter 3 saw a major milestone reached in that council has its first Micro-Care enterprise delivering commissioned domiciliary care. This has been a major target since the project first began and is integral to the original aims of Micro-Care in Flintshire to address gaps in domiciliary care where agencies were unable to provide the support, either due to rurality or the structure of support required. This enterprise is currently delivering 11.5 hours of commissioned support for 2 individuals, with the brokerage team exploring further gaps that would be appropriate.</p>
1.03	<p>Micro-Care has diversified into providing support through the warm-hub housing project. While not delivering personal care services, 4 Micro-Carers supported the hubs by delivering activity and well-being sessions to those attending, with the aim of attracting and retaining people while supporting them with the cost-of-living crisis. Feedback from housing colleagues on the Micro-Carers involvement with these projects has been positive and reflected well on the work they have been doing.</p>
1.04	<p>The first Micro-Care enterprise to setup as a day service in Flintshire has been established in Flint and Saltney. This service supports people with early or middle stage dementia and provides meaningful activities for people to continue to utilise use their skills and promote their independence. This service has had great outcomes for those attending as well as providing a quality respite alternative. Services have been accessed through private purchase agreements, direct payments or the "bridging the gap" respite scheme, although this provider has passed the Quality Framework for commissioning Micro-Care so is available for commissioned day care in the future.</p>
1.05	<p>Prospective Micro-Carers identify the opportunity to become a Micro-Carer through several recruitment sources such as recruitment websites, Care@Flintshire website, leaflet, recruitment events, direct referrals from employment support agencies, and word of mouth. They are encouraged to email the Micro-Care team on micro-care@flintshire.gov.uk or call directly to enquire.</p>

1.06	Following initial contact, the person will be offered an introduction to the concept of Micro-Care, including how it works, how they would receive work, the regulatory position on Micro-Care and the requirements from the council to advertise their organisation on our list of Micro-Carers. The latter consists of six steps. They would be provided with an expression of interest form, which would help the person begin to explore what their business would be.
1.07	Following the submission of an expression of interest form, prospective Micro-Carers would be supported through the first step in considering their business profile. This would consider business activities, how, when and where they would operate, and their rates for services. At this stage details of contacts at Social Firms Wales and Business Wales will be shared for specialist business advice.
1.08	A prospective Micro-Care will then be supported to develop the recording systems and policies that are required when working in social care. Recording systems would be paperwork such as care plans, notes from visits, medication recording, and financial transaction recording. This would also be the point where Micro-Carers would be referred to the principles and tools associated with the Progress for Providers Accreditation.
1.09	Along with some of the development activities required to become a Micro-Carer, due diligence on the person is also completed. This is in the form of obtaining previous employment references, a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check, and a manual search on the Social Care Wales register to ensure people have not been previously prevented from working in social care.
1.10	Micro-Care providers will also be required to undertake mandatory training courses in several areas integral to the delivery of safe social care practice. This will be dependent on the activities outlined in the business profile but courses such as safeguarding and infection control would be mandatory, along with moving and positioning and medication for those delivering direct personal care. Training is provided free of charge by the Flintshire County Council Workforce Development Team, and existing training would also be recognised and accepted if undertaken within a suitable timeframe.
1.11	The final steps for Micro-Carers would be to obtain public liability insurance for their business and to register with HMRC. At this point the Micro-Carers details would be displayed on the circulated list of Micro-Care providers and they will begin marketing their services across their local area.
1.12	Throughout the process of setting up as a Micro-Carer the person will be supported through regular meetings with officers, either in person or online, and will be referred to partner agencies for specialist advice. They are also supported financially through a seed funding application. This is a specific element of the grant received from Foundational Economy Challenge Fund, and administered by Social Firms Wales, which is reserved to support enterprises with start up costs. Such start up costs

	include DBS applications, insurances, work phones, marketing costs and IT resources.
1.13	To enable the commissioning of Micro-Carers there is an additional step in the "Quality Framework". This would require providers to demonstrate they have understanding and competency in a number of areas that are integral to the delivery of social care services and are able to sign the terms and conditions required by the council. Commissioned Micro-Carers are also monitored on an annual basis by the Contracts Team which mirrors the process for registered providers.

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	The project is funded through the Foundational Economy Challenge Fund. Along with a full-time officer assigned to the project, funding has been provided for project costs and IT development. An allocation of seed funding and development grants are available through this funding, but this is passed to Social Firms Wales to administer. As part of the application for funding, the council has committed to providing a full time Contracts Officer, and the contribution of time from the Commissioning Manager and Contracts Manager.

3.00	IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT
3.01	Micro-Care is an unregulated service which means that it is not inspected by Care Inspectorate Wales, providing the enterprises do not provide personal care services to more than 4 individuals. This makes Micro-Care a more accessible option for people looking to start up their own enterprise in social care and creates more options for people looking for social care services. However, the lack of oversight from a regulatory body can be seen as a risk.
3.02	Our approach to Micro-Care ensures that we undertake due diligence when supporting people to start up as a Micro-Carer, ensuring checks on DBS status, insurance status, fitness to work and references. For privately purchased care the responsibility rests with the individual to monitor the quality of the services they purchase, the details on how to refer cases of poor quality back to the council are made clear in the Micro-Carer's complaints policy. The team are also working closely with Welsh Government on their engagement of Micro-Care to establish a national policy position.

4.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED/CARRIED OUT
4.01	There is regular consultation with people being supported to become a Micro-Carer on how the process is working for them. We also hold network meetings to enable active Micro-Carers to feedback into changes they want made to the project and to share any operational issues they face.

	The working patterns of Micro-Carers are considered when arranging the timing of these meetings.
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5.00	APPENDICES
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5.01	None.
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6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
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6.01	https://www.careatflintshire.co.uk/en/Micro-care/Welcome.aspx
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7.00	CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS
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7.01	<p>Contact Officer: Jane Davies - Senior Manager Safeguarding and Commissioning Telephone: 01352 702503 E-mail: jane.m.davies@flintshire.gov.uk</p>
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8.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
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8.01	<p>Micro-Care Business/Enterprises – Care businesses providing care services and employing no more than 5 people.</p> <p>Quality Framework – is a document which sets out the core commitment to quality in social care. It is designed to ensure that once all essential criteria are completed a micro-care providers will be trained to a sufficient level and able to undertake care packages via our commissioning team.</p> <p>Progress for Providers Accreditation – An accreditation scheme to assess the quality of individualised care and support from care providers</p> <p>Foundational Economy Challenge Fund – Funding for a series of experimental projects enable Welsh Government to test how they can support the services and products which every citizen relies, such as care, food and housing.</p>
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