

SOCIAL & HEALTH CARE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
29 FEBRUARY 2024

Minutes of the meeting of the Social & Health Care Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held as a hybrid meeting on Thursday, 29 February 2024

PRESENT: Councillor Arnold Woolley (Chair)

Councillors: Marion Bateman, Mel Buckley, Tina Claydon, Carol Ellis, Gladys Healey, Hilary McGuill, David Mackie, Debbie Owen and Linda Thomas.

CONTRIBUTORS: Councillor Christine Jones (Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Social Services and Wellbeing); Chief Officer (Social Services); Senior Manager – Safeguarding and Commissioning; Senior Manager for Adults; Service Manager for the In-House Provider Services / Responsible Individual for Flintshire and Deputy Team Manager with Early Interventions

IN ATTENDANCE: Social Care and Environment Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator and Democratic Services Officer

47. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)

None.

48. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME AND ACTION TRACKING

The Social Care and Environment Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator presented the current Forward Work Programme and Action Tracking as set out in the report and reminded members who had not responded to her email to let her know if they could attend the site visit / workshop which was to be held on 13th March 2024. She added that further details regarding the visit would be circulated shortly.

In response to a question raised by Councillor Mackie concerning the heavy agendas for the next two meetings the Chief Officer (Social Services) stated that this was due to the fact that the meetings that were due to be held in April and May had been cancelled due to the Police and Crime Commission Election that was being held in May.

The recommendations within the report were moved by Councillor Mackie and seconded by Councillor Gladys Healey.

RESOLVED:

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

49. RISCA RESPONSIBLE INDIVIDUALS ANNUAL REPORT

The Service Manager for the In-House Provider Services introduced himself as the Responsible Individual for Flintshire who ensured that provider services met the statutory requirements as set out in the Regulation and Inspection of Social Care Act 2016 (RISCA). He reported on how in house regulated services listed below had performed over the last 12 months:

- Older People's residential care homes– Marleyfield House, Llys Gwenffrwd and Croes Atti.
- Extra Care Housing – Llys Eleanor, Llys Jasmine, Llys Raddington, Plas Yr Ywen.
- Older People's Community Support – Holywell, Deeside and Mold localities.
- Short-term respite for people with a learning disability – Hafod and Woodlee.
- Supported Living – 17 houses across Flintshire.

And until recently

- Childrens services - Tŷ Nyth, Park Avenue and the small Group Homes. But due to the size of the portfolio Melvin Jones has been appointed as the Responsible Individual.

In response to questions raised by Councillor Mackie the Service Manager for the In-House Provider Services / Responsible Officer advised that staffing was a challenge and since the pandemic there were 50,000 less care workers across the UK. He advised that staffing had been given priority and that they had started to see some improvement although pay was a challenge in retaining staff. He explained that staff were valued and supported particularly if they had a challenging day. He mentioned one benefit to staff was that they were able to use one of the 6 electric cars on a rota basis to prevent wear and tear on their own cars plus it enabled them to go into work if their car was off the road. He informed members that they were looking into getting more cars in the future.

He advised that the 16 beds in Marleyfield were direct discharge from hospital beds and individuals needs were assessed in Marleyfield house by a wraparound team to support their assessment and also their re-enablement for their longer term needs.

He agreed that the report did need more explanation in terms of the word challenging and explained that when hospitals knew there were empty beds it could cause pressure for hospital and the home manager as until recently that had been operating at 12 beds as they were not always able to fill them all with the appropriate people but advised members that they were in a much better place since the report had been written.

The Senior Manager for Adults added that it was challenging at times to find the appropriate people with the rehab potential if they were in an acute hospital bed

because people de-skill quickly and lose independence. She explained that there was a particular skill in identifying people with potential to get back to their base and improve and stated that things had improved over the last 12 months in identifying people early on in their journey especially over the last 3 months and that was how they had been able to fill those 16 beds. She added that they would also be working with 5 people who would have been sent home in order for them to meet their independence needs and would also be assessing another 5 people to move into one of the beds at Marleyfield.

In response to the issue raised by members about meals the Service Manager for the In-House Provider Services / Responsible Individual for Flintshire advised that he had met with the Chief Executive of Cater Plus who provided the meals and explained that he was happy for them to manage improvements but that he would be raising it with members and reported that some improvements had been made.

He confirmed that there was a waiting list for short term care and that they were looking at utilising some of the Residential Care Homes as some of the adults with limited disabilities were getting older and they would be better suited having respite in the likes of Marleyfield House and was hopeful that the new Croes Atti would have some provision for respite for adults with learning disabilities.

In response to a number of questions raised by Councillor Gladys Healey the Service Manager for the In-House Provider Services / Responsible Officer advised that he was responsible for the in-house provision and carried out informal as well as formal inspections of those homes whereas the private sector was governed in a different way but they also had responsible individuals who go out to inspect their homes. He advised that when they recruited staff they looked for people with the right values and ethics and that they had a very comprehensive training programme and staff needed to be registered with Social Care Wales. He confirmed that the Countess of Chester Hospital made a contribution for the use of beds at Marleyfield House.

In response to questions raised by Councillor Ellis the Service Manager for the In-House Provider Services / Responsible Officer advised that in both adult and children's services they had about 38 vacancies but percentage wise it was slightly higher in Children's Services which currently stood at 18 vacancies. He advised that they didn't use agency staff to fill the gap they had restricted capacity explaining that they currently supported 6 children instead of 10 and that the number of children they support would increase with the right level of staff.

He confirmed that in adults services they had 20 vacancies across the board. He advised that they did have good quality agency staff but that they were a financial challenge to Council and that they would have more control and continuity of care with their own staff. Also, there was a limit to the extra hours that staff had to cover.

The Senior Manager for Adults added that they had a rolling program of recruitment and used a Marketing Company who had developed a very informative video which was on the Council's website, also they had been working with Social Care Wales around recruitment and they had also looked at how they advertised and tried to make job descriptions / person specification as attractive as possible. They had tried lots of different areas to market themselves to show that Flintshire was a good place to work and had also worked with HR to speed up the recruitment process.

In response to questions raised by Councillor McGuill the Service Manager for the In-House Provider Services / Responsible Officer advised that he had a conversation with a member of staff recently who said that they enjoyed their job due to the relationship they had with their manager who understood what was expected of them and that they were able to go to them if they had a problem.

In terms of the menu, he had requested that a meeting between the tenant and the residents be strengthened. He confirmed that they do meet with the kitchen but his biggest concern was that not enough people attended the meetings which he advised that he has asked managers to ensure that this was broadened.

He stated that rota visits did take place about 12 months ago and he would pick that up with the team and will get them started again.

The Senior Manager – Safeguarding and Commissioning responded to Councillor Bateman concerning the electric cars and advised that Welsh Government had a grant available 2023/24 to support domiciliary care workers with travel as that was one of the restrictions on recruitment. She advised that approximately £760 per person who didn't have a driving licence was used from the grant to pay for their lessons and test and some more of the money was used to purchase 3 electric cars through fleet services and when the situation was reviewed it was decided that 3 more would be beneficial so they now had 6 electric cars with the charging points, which could only be used for those cars on a fob basis.

The Service Manager for the In-House Provider Services / Responsible Individual for Flintshire asked if Members would prefer a more detailed annual report style for the service as the current format didn't give much background and didn't do justice to the work that was being carried out which members welcomed.

The recommendations within the report were moved by Councillor Gladys Healey and seconded by Councillor Debbie Owen.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted and approved.

50. POOLED BUDGET AGREEMENT FOR CARE HOME ACCOMMODATION FOR OLDER PEOPLE

The Senior Manager – Safeguarding and Commissioning introduced the report which was to seek approval for the partnership arrangements between Health and Social Care across regions and the importance of working together for the shared benefit for those who received services. She explained that Welsh Government required Health and Local Authorities to work together financially as well as service driven. Within North Wales the Legislation was taken and in the financial year 2019/20 a single regional pooled budget was agreed for the 6 Local Authorities and Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board

In response to Councillor Mackie the Senior Manager – Safeguarding and Commissioning explained that the legislation came into being in 2016 but pooled budgets were complex structures and that all 7 partners needed to come to an agreement on how it could be achieved which took a period of time and resulted in it taking until July 2019 to be compliant but was back dated to the new financial year in April 2019 as part of the original proposal.

The Senior Manager – Safeguarding and Commissioning explained to members that a pooled budget was the sharing of financial risks and as there was a need to recognise Welsh Governments aspirations that they worked more closely with the Health Board it was agreed that all North Wales Local Authorities and the Health Board put the budget that they would spend for older peoples' care and health within the care home market in the pooled budget she advised that this met with the statutory legislation requirement and that Welsh Government were happy with the arrangement. She stipulated that not everyone put the same amount in but the amount that was put in was the same that came out. In 2022/23 Flintshire put in £10.5 million. She advised that there was a shared administration cost of £20,000 per year paid to Denbighshire for hosting the budget on behalf of the 6 authorities and the Health Board to cover the monthly reporting to Welsh Government and audit and admin costs.

The Chief Officer (Social Services) added that he was not aware of the intentions of the Civil Servants that drew up the regulations but the alternative would be a fully fledged pooled budget whereby they all put in what they spent on care homes across the region and that is pooled in one large budget but that way had too many risks.

The recommendations within the report were moved by Councillor Hilary McGuill and seconded by Councillor Gladys Healey.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That members support the progress made regionally in meeting the Part 9 requirements of the 2014 Act which includes a legal requirement to establish a regional pooled fund for care home accommodation for older people and:
- (b) That members support the council entering into a legal agreement between Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board and the six local authorities across North Wales, regulating the operation and governance arrangements in respect of the pooled fund until such time that they need to terminate the agreement.

51. CONTEXTUAL SAFEGUARDING

The Deputy Team Manager with the Early Interventions Service within Children's Services who had been involved with the development of the Contextual Safeguarding approach for Flintshire introduced the report and briefly explained that it was an approach in the safeguarding and protection of young people that were at risk of extra familial harm which was harm outside of the family household.

In response to Councillor Bateman the Deputy Team Manager, Early Intervention Services advised that the age range of 10-25 was from the original research that had been undertaken and was based on the development of the brain she explained that up until the age of 25 the brain was not fully developed. She advised that the focus in Flintshire was 18 and may go lower than 10. She confirmed that online safety was a complex matter and that they worked closely with the Lucy Faithful Foundation who offer support. She confirmed that the team currently consisted of herself from Children's Services and other partners agencies.

In response to Councillor Gladys Healey the Deputy Team Manager, Early Intervention Services advised that County Lines cases were dealt with on a case-by-case basis depending on the level of risk and that some individuals were moved out of County to a secure placement which enabled them to make the environment safer for when they returned and also for others within that area.

In response to Councillor Hilary McGuill the Deputy Team Manager, Early Intervention Services confirmed that the way they dealt with exploitation did come from the Rochdale Enquiry. She explained that they worked closely with North Wales Police with Online safety by providing information and intelligence to enable them to target the right areas. They also worked closely with Youth Services to find out what distractions were needed and their findings suggested that the youths didn't want organised youth clubs they want a safe warm place with Wi-Fi where they could meet their friends but unfortunately they didn't have the resources but would use the information to build an evidence base with some of the detached work that was going on.

The recommendations within the report were moved by Councillor Dave Mackie and seconded by Councillor Hilary McGuill.

RESOLVED:

That members support the ongoing development and co-ordinated approach to contextual safeguarding that maximises resources to enable a streamlined and effective approach to individual and contextual safeguarding.

52. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS IN ATTENDANCE

There were no members of the press in attendance.

(The meeting started at 2.00 pm and ended at 4.17 pm)

.....
Chair