

SOCIAL AND HEALTH CARE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
22 OCTOBER 2020

Minutes of the remote meeting of the Social and Health Care Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held on Thursday, 22 October 2020

PRESENT: Councillor Hilary McGill (Chair)

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

APOLOGIES: Chief Executive

CONTRIBUTORS: Councillor Christine Jones (Cabinet Member for Social Services), Chief Officer (Social Services), Senior Manager: Integrated Services, Lead Adults, Senior Manager: Children and Workforce, and Senior Manager: Safeguarding and Commissioning. (For minute no. 6 Donna Watts, Multi Systematic Therapy Team Manager

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

01. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

02. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 September 2020 were approved, as moved by Councillor David Wisinger and seconded by Councillor Carol Ellis.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be approved as a correct record.

03. EMERGENCY SITUATION BRIEFING (VERBAL)

The Chief Officer (Social Services) gave an update on the current situation and said that the Health Protection Zone, which included Flintshire County Council as one of the four local Authorities which formed the zone, had made a positive impact on Covid-19 locally. He explained that the Authority was in readiness for the national “firebreak” which comes into force in Wales at 18.00 hours on Friday 23 October. The Chief Officer reported on the arrangements for Social Services during the lockdown which were in compliance with the requirements and spirit of the Welsh Government’s recent announcement. He gave a brief update on the position around Care Homes and key services in other social care establishments in Flintshire in terms of the impact of Covid-19.

The Chief Officer advised that services were being maintained and admissions to hospital prevented wherever possible to keep individuals safe and health and social care systems working effectively. He reported that national, regional and local preparations were being made on an 'exit plan' for when the lockdown ended on 9 November, and the Leader and Chief Executive were fully involved in discussions.

Councillor Carol Ellis asked if the flu vaccination programme for children in primary schools was underway. She also asked if data was available on the number of Covid-19 cases currently being treated in the Maelor Hospital, Wrexham. The Chief Officer said he would consult with colleagues in the Education service and provide an update on the flu vaccination programme in schools to Councillor Ellis following the meeting. He also commented on the fluctuating situation in hospitals due to Covid-19 and said an increase in the number of cases in North East Wales had put some pressure on the Maelor hospital as a result.

RESOLVED:

Noted.

04. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME AND ACTION TRACKING

The Facilitator presented the Forward Work Programme and drew attention to the next meeting of the Committee to be held on 11 November, to consider the Medium Term Financial Strategy: Council Fund Revenue Budget 2021/22 outline. The Facilitator also referred to the meeting of the Committee scheduled for 3 December and advised that the item on Young Carers – NEWCIS Contract would be deferred to the following meeting scheduled on 21 January 2021. She also said that the Community Transformation Project update may be deferred to a future meeting. She invited Members to contact her or the Chair with any further items they wished to add to the Forward Work Programme.

The Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator presented the progress report on actions arising from previous meetings. She advised that the action arising from the meeting held on 22 September had been completed and no other actions were outstanding.

The recommendations in the report were moved by Councillor Michelle Perfect and seconded by Councillor Marion Bateman.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the draft Forward Work programme as submitted 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 progress made in completing the outstanding actions be noted.

05. RECOVERY STRATEGY

The Chief Officer (Social Services) introduced a report to provide an oversight on the recovery planning for the Committee's respective portfolio. He provided background information and said an update on the portfolio risk register and risk mitigation actions were shown in Appendices 1 and 2 of the report. He advised that an update on the recovery objectives for the service portfolio for the Committee were detailed in paragraph 1.05 of the report and reported on the key considerations.

The Chief Officer explained that where services had been partially resumed, the return to normal operating hours and usage would be in line with Public Health Wales and Welsh Government advice. He referred to the current lockdown and said that during the 'firebreak' period some services would be discontinued but some would be ongoing for people and children with high vulnerability.

The Chair expressed thanks on behalf of the Committee to the Chief Officer and his team for their hard work and commitment to continue provision of services during the pandemic. She also congratulated the Chief Officer on the achievements made by Adult and Children's Social Services throughout the challenges faced this year.

Councillor Cindy Hinds commented on the issue of mental health and asked if there had been an increase in individuals suffering mental illness as a result of the impact of Covid-19. The Chief Officer responded that there had been an increase in the number of people who suffered mental health issues during the last seven months as some people struggled with the psychological effects of a lockdown. In terms of support for the workforce the Senior Manager: Integrated Services, Lead Adults explained that the Service was working closely with MIND and there was a programme of support to assist all individuals who required help in the workforce.

Councillor Dave Mackie endorsed the Chair's comments regarding how well Social Services was performing to mitigate the impact of Covid-19 and suggested that the recommendation in the report be amended to read That the Committee supports the latest updated risk register and risk mitigation actions within the Social Services portfolio. This was agreed by the Committee.

The recommendation in the report was moved by Councillor David Wisinger and seconded by Councillor Jean Davies.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee supports the latest updated risk register and risk mitigation actions within the Social Services portfolio.

06. CHILDREN'S TRANSFORMATION PROJECT UPDATE

The Senior Manager Children and Workforce introduced a report on progress and future plans for a project to secure transformational change across health and social care. He advised that North Wales had secured £3m grant funding for a regional Transformation Programme for children's social care. Working on a regional footprint the programme was delivered on an Area basis. The East Area project was a partnership between Flintshire County Council, Betsi Cadwaladr University and Wrexham Borough Council. The Senior Manager explained that the project would help parents with low/moderate mental health needs; bring health and social care staff together to provide intensive assessment and therapeutic support for young people who didn't meet the thresholds for CAMHS but were displaying significant needs and required support; and develop a local residential Care Home to meet the needs of young people whilst seeking family reunification or a longer term local fostering/residential placement.

The Senior Manager reported on the main considerations regarding the above workstreams within the Children's Transformation Project. With reference to the second workstream he explained that during the pandemic a Multi Systematic Therapy (MST) team had been appointed, trained, and launched. The Team provided direct support to build the resilience of families between 3 and 5 months. The focus was on preventing family breakdown and reducing the need for children to unnecessarily enter the care system. He introduced Donna Watts, Manager of the Multi Systematic Therapy team and asked her to give an overview of the Service.

The Multi Systematic Therapy Manager explained that the Team had met the criteria to operate MST under strict licensing requirements including competency to practice through intensive training. MST was a clinical model that worked with all systems surrounding the child including education, community influences, and any significant adults/others in the family. The service was a bespoke package of care which offered home based treatment 24 hours, 365 days a year. During her presentation the Manager cited examples of how MST had successfully changed the lives of individuals as a result of the treatment and support provided. The Authority was the first in Wales to adopt it.

In response to a question from the Chair regarding how a referral was made into the MST Service the Manager explained that all referrals had to be made via Children's Services whether received from Flintshire County Council or Betsi Cadwaladr University. As awareness of the service increased more referrals were being made. The Senior Manager Children and Workforce, gave a brief overview of the referral pathway and said each referral made to Social Services was scrutinised by a panel to determine the best pathway for each case to obtain maximum benefit from the MST service.

Councillor Dave Mackie spoke in support of the MST service and congratulated the MST Manager and officers on their management of the project. In response to the concerns and comments expressed by Councillor Mackie around education, the MST Manager confirmed that school involvement was part of the model and any problematic behaviours in school would be picked up. The Senior Manager,

Children and Workforce explained that officers from the Education Service and Youth Justice Service were included on the Steering Group to capture all that was happening in a child's life.

In conclusion the Senior Manager reported on the third work stream around the ambitions and progress on the development of a local residential Care Home for young people. He explained that young people could stay for a short period and be given intensive MST assessment and support work to prevent the need for placements to be made in a crisis situation. The Chair referred to the Phoenix project provided by the North Wales Fire Service and suggested that a possible link be explored between the two services. The Senior Manager agreed to look into this.

Councillor Gladys Healey spoke in support of the projects and initiatives and suggested that a presentation on the MST Service be made to a future meeting of the Education & Youth Overview & Scrutiny Committee. The Education & Youth Facilitator informed that a joint meeting of the Education, Youth & Culture and Social & Health Care Overview & Scrutiny Committee was scheduled to be held on 17 June 2021 and said she would include an item on the MST Service on the agenda for the meeting.

The recommendations in the report were moved by Councillor Paul Cunningham and seconded by Councillor David Wisinger.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Committee endorses the work to safely reduce the number of children in need of care through early help and intensive targeted support for families;
- (b) That the Committee supports the establishment of a local authority Children's Residential Care Home as part of an approach to rebalance care provision for children, with a focus on ensuring an affordable and sufficient range of local high quality placements; and
- (c) That a report on the Multi Systematic Therapy project be considered at the joint meeting of the Education, Youth & Culture and Social & Health Care Overview & Scrutiny Committee to be held on 17 June 2021.

07. PROJECT SEARCH IN FLINTSHIRE

The Senior Manager: Integrated Services, Lead Adults, introduced a report to give an update on the success of last year's interns on Project Search and provide information on next year's cohort. She explained that Project SEARCH was an internationally recognised programme dedicated to building a workforce that includes people with disabilities. Designed as a nine month unpaid internship program Project SEARCH places interns (young people aged 18-24 with a Learning Disability) in real-world work settings where they learn all aspects of gaining and maintaining employment. A series of three internships lasting 10-12 weeks allows interns to explore careers and develop marketable job skills. The

interns receive support from department mentors, skills trainers, and worksite accommodations and adaptations. The goal being for each individual to secure competitive employment within their community and many of the interns have secured paid employment in Flintshire.

The Senior Manager reported on plans going forward. She advised that in preparation for the second year of Project SEARCH a number of new internship opportunities were being sought and secured. The Service was also scoping the development of a programme to support people over 25 years who may not have been able to access an opportunity in the past. She advised that this would be the first programme of its type in Europe.

Councillor Christine Jones spoke in support of the Project and said the young people had greatly enjoyed their time on the programme and had gained confidence and experience through the variety of opportunities they participated in. She said Project SEARCH in Flintshire was provided between Flintshire County Council, Hft, Clwyd Alyn Housing Association and Coleg Cambria, and expressed her thanks for the hard work and commitment of all involved.

Councillor Carol Ellis asked how many people with a learning disability were employed directly by Flintshire County Council and also employed in the Flintshire area. The Senior Manager agreed to provide the information to the Committee following the meeting.

Councillor Gladys Healey commented that only 2% of young people with a learning disability in Wales were in paid employment and said there was a need to encourage employers to do more to help people gain employment. The Senior Manager reported on progress made to date to engage with local employers, citing employment in Deeside Industrial Park as an example, and said employers were keen to support people with learning difficulties.

Following a suggestion from Councillor Paul Cunningham that Deeside Business Forum be contacted it was agreed that following the meeting, the Senior Manager would request an update from the Chairman of Deeside Business Forum and make a request for further support going forward.

Councillor Dave Mackie expressed appreciation to the Chief Officer, Senior Managers, and their teams for their initiative in taking forward new and innovative schemes to support and develop people within the County.

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

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the progress made through the service partnership with Hft and the success of the interns in year 1 of the programme be noted; and
- (b) That the Committee champions the programme and supports and encourages the development of internship opportunities across the Council.

08. MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS IN ATTENDANCE

There was one member of the press in attendance.

(The meeting started at 10.00 am and ended at 11.24 am)

.....

Chair