

Social & Health Care Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Date of Meeting	9 th December 2021
Report Subject	Supporting the Stability of the Social Care Market
Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Social Services
Report Author	Chief Officer for Social Services
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The whole health and social care sector across the UK is currently experiencing severe pressures arising from COVID 19, the increased demand for services which is higher now than pre-pandemic, and a significant reduction in capacity arising from a mix of staff shortages and the inability to recruit new staff into the sector.

This report reflects the support being made available by the Council to create stability in the independent social care market which in turn increases capacity within the system and supports the health board to maintain patient flow through the health system and support the discharge of patients back into the community.

Flintshire County Council has been leading the work of the North Wales Regional Leadership Group in working creatively to address the challenges and identify immediate and long-term solutions which can either be implemented locally or which need national support by Welsh Government.

Part of this work is to review the funding required to support an inflationary increase for the social care provider market in 2022/23 as well as an ask of Welsh Government for sustainable care fees which address the true cost of care, but which are currently outside the financial envelope available to the Council.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	That the Committee notes the progress made to support the stability of the social care sector in Flintshire.
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2	That the Committee reviews and comments on the Social Care cost pressures.
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REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING SUPPORTING THE STABILITY OF THE SOCIAL CARE MARKET
1.01	<p>The COVID 19 pandemic has brought to a head the severe pressures within the health and social care sector which are manifesting themselves in many different ways. The root causes of these pressures have been identified as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an increase in demand post-COVID as families who had cared for loved ones at home during the pandemic now turn to services for care and support • people choosing to live at home for as long as possible, with a reluctance to move to a care home, this in turn creates additional demand for domiciliary care • health services are at maximum capacity as they work through waiting lists for planned and routine treatments, whilst also continuing to care for those affected by COVID-19 • the social care workforce are exhausted with many leaving the sector either to take on roles outside social care, or making life-style changes • recruitment of workers into all areas of social care is very challenging, with care providers reporting the lowest number of applicants in living memory. Salaries, terms and conditions and competition from other sectors are seen as the main reasons for these difficulties.
1.02	National Ask
1.03	The Council has worked with North Wales partners to put in place an action plan for the region, as well as an ask of Welsh Government to support the sector. This was submitted to Welsh Government in September (Appendix 1) and has been part of the reference material to support Ministers and civil servants. At time of writing we await an announcement from Welsh Government of the type and level of support for social care.
1.04	Regional Action
1.05	The North Wales Health and Social Care Tactical Silver Response Group remains in place and has been working to deliver meaningful statistics to help identify pressure points in the system and address those, this includes work to identify and speed up the discharge of those individuals who are medically fit.
1.06	A North Wales Workforce Task and Finish Group has been established to review and amend the Memorandum of Understanding between care providers and the health board, which gives social care providers access to the Health Board Staff Bank. This Task and Finish Group has also

	reviewed the establishment of a carer register to support social care providers who are reliant on agency care staff.
1.07	A Falls Task and Finish Group has been established to develop a multi-agency Community Assistance Team who can support individuals who fall at home, or in a care home and who are unable to receive a timely ambulance response due to the increased pressures on the Welsh Ambulance Service Trust (WAST).
1.08	Local Initiatives
1.09	In 2019, the Council obtained funding through Cadwyn Clwyd and the Welsh Government Foundational Economy Fund to establish Microcare with the view to increasing the number of care providers delivering well-being and personal care in the community. The initiative is in its second year and has proven incredibly successful with 22 Microcarers now up and running delivering over 500 hours of care per week to the residents of Flintshire. This has helped to support the increased demand on both in-house domiciliary care services and the independent sector care providers.
1.10	We have invested in our Care Brokerage Team to allow them to broker not only domiciliary care packages but to also source and arrange care home packages. Our Care Brokerage Team have invested in digital technology and utilise the Council digital mapping system to map community care packages and ensure the best use of resources at any one time.
1.11	Our Care Brokerage Team have also developed strong working relationships with the independent care providers and work closely to maximise carer capacity and reduce travel time to make best use of the resources available.
1.12	Our in-house reablement service continues to work closely with the Care Brokerage Team to deliver flexible care packages and meet the ongoing demand for domiciliary care.
1.13	The Council's strategic decision to support the expansion of Marleyfield House Care Home have created additional capacity in the system to accommodate the Discharge to Recover and Assess model (D2RA) which allows individuals to leave hospital and move into a care home where therapeutic services are on hand to support their reablement and undertake a true assessment of their care and support needs once they have stabilised following a hospital admission and discharge.
1.14	A Planning and Development Officer post has been put in place to coordinate a number of recruitment and retention initiatives across the Flintshire Social Care Sector. These initiatives include a series of job fairs, the use of electric bikes /scooters to allow non-drivers to complete domiciliary care rounds, the delivery of Social Care Induction Training for those not in education, employment or training to explore a career in social care, and many more.

1.15	A Recruitment and Retention Task and Finish Group has been established to review amongst other areas, in-house recruitment processes, creative and modern job adverts and the speed of recruitment.
1.16	Financial Support
1.17	There remains a significant risk to the financial stability and sustainability of the independent care provider market as the costs of delivering care continue to rise, an example being the increase in utility costs (gas and electric), increase in food prices, increase in inductance premiums and the necessary increase in staff wages to retain existing staff and recruit new.
1.18	The sector is competing against other sectors in particular retail and hospitality and Welsh Government support is urgently required to meet the Real Living Wage commitment, as well as additional care provider costs.
1.19	The Council has worked with providers and North Wales partners to identify the inflationary cost increases anticipated for 2022/23, these have been set aside in the MTFS as a Social Care Commissioning pressure of £2.698m. This is an increase of £0.746m on the original MTFS forecast to take account of the new National Living Wage of £9.50 p.h. and a higher than anticipated Consumer Prices Index increase. Further modelling is currently being undertaken which may result in a further pressure if inflationary increases continue to rise.
1.20	It is important to state that these are only inflationary increases and do not address the core concerns relating to the historic national underfunding of the social care sector over many years. The true cost of care is reflected in the Ask of Welsh Government and in subsequent papers submitted by WLGA (Welsh Local Government Association) and ADSS Cymru (Association of Directors of Social Services Cymru).

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	The 2022/23 pressure for Social Care Commissioning is currently recorded at £2.698m within the MTFS.
2.02	Resources have been made available through Recovery funding to support the Planning and Development Officer post.
2.03	A limited amount of resource has been made available to facilitate local initiative (for example the printing of leaflets to advertise care as a career and the creation of videos to attract staff to the care sector).

3.00	IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT
3.01	A full Risk Register is recoded and maintained through the Recruitment and Retention Task and Finish Group. These risks are reported at each group meeting and shared with the Social Services Programme Board as a standing agenda item.

4.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED/CARRIED OUT
4.01	Consultation has been taking place regularly with our independent care providers in Flintshire, as well as with partner agencies from across North Wales. The findings from these consultation and engagement sessions are feeding into the work of the Planning and Development Officer and the Task and Finish Group.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	Appendix 1 – North Wales Regional Leadership Board Letter to Welsh Government

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	None

7.00	CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS
7.01	<p>Contact Officer: Jane Davies, Senior Manager Safeguarding and Commissioning Telephone: 01352 702503 E-mail: jane.m.davies@flintshire.gov.uk</p>

8.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
8.01	<p>(1) MTFS – Medium Term Financial Strategy – financial pressures which make up the additional budget requirement within a Portfolio area.</p> <p>(2) Health Board Staff Bank – an in house staffing agency arrangement where staff can be employed by the health board on either flexible contracts and provide relief cover when shifts cannot be staffed.</p> <p>(3) Foundational Economy Fund – A Welsh Government fund which allows for the testing of innovative ways of supporting and growing foundational economy so that we can spread good practice right across Wales. The Fund supports experimental projects that are collaborative and innovative, test which Governmental interventions works best and challenge the conventional ways of doing things.</p> <p>(4) Cadwyn Clwyd - Focuses on actions, which stimulate grass-root participation, partnership working and innovation to support projects for</p>

rural communities and sector groups. It works directly with local communities to assist in the development and implementation of projects, which benefit the area's local economy.

(5) Real Living Wage - The Real Living Wage is based on the cost of living and is voluntarily paid by nearly 9,000 UK employers.

(6) National Living Wage (National Minimum Wage) - The National Minimum Wage is the minimum pay per hour almost all workers are entitled to. The National Living Wage is higher than the National Minimum Wage and is paid to workers over the age of 23.