

SOCIAL AND HEALTH CARE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Thursday, 20 th January 2022
Report Subject	Flintshire Micro-care Project
Cabinet Member	Deputy Leader of the Council (Partnerships) and Cabinet Member for Social Services for Social Services
Report Author	Chief Officer (Social Services)
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

We, like many local authorities, face pressures in meeting the increasing demand for social care, with a growing older population and care agencies finding it difficult to recruit and retain employees. Delivering care into more rural parts can be particularly problematic.

Following a feasibility study we have established a pilot Micro-care enterprises project to innovatively tackle the problem of the supply of care and have been successful in bidding for funding from both Cadwyn Clwyd and the Welsh Government to support the implementation of the project.

Micro-care enterprises are defined as small companies with 5 employees, many of which are sole traders, providing care or care-related services to the citizens of Flintshire. The pilot scheme to date has successfully supported 22 individuals to set up and operate as an independent care business. In September 2021, these businesses were delivering to 79 clients and delivered an average of 497 hours of care, support or wellbeing (based on September's figures). Of the 497 hours, 420 were for personal care and 77 hours were for well-being type services (e.g. cleaning, shopping, and companionship).

The scheme has met all its key performance indicator targets for both funders and due to its success has been funded for a further 12 months by Welsh Government Foundational Economy Fund for 2021/22. This will be used to continue the Micro-care scheme and grow the number of micro businesses established and delivering care across the county.

Following an early evaluation of the scheme it has been identified that Micro-Care in Flintshire is already making a significant contribution to the care market. It is creating sustainable jobs and more localised care solutions for people. Feedback from clients, families and council officers has been extremely positive to date.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	That Members continue to support the progress made in rolling out the innovative Micro-care pilot and the positive contribution the scheme is making in meeting the demand for care in Flintshire.
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REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE FLINTSHIRE MICROCARE PROJECT
1.01	Pressures on the social care sector are well documented. The North Wales Population Assessment (2017) projects that in Flintshire, we are likely to see an unprecedented increase in the number of older people (those aged 65+) from 30,000 in 2014 to 46,000 by 2039. The impact this can have on the current social care sector is vast, given that there are currently issues with a lack of capacity in the sector.
1.02	A Feasibility study carried out by Social Firms Wales on behalf of the Council examined the potential for developing Micro-care enterprises in Flintshire. Following the report in January 2019, approval was given to set up a Pilot Micro-care project in Flintshire and a multi-agency micro-care Implementation Board was established. The project is part of the wider Council Alternative Delivery Model (ADM) Programme.
1.03	Micro-enterprises are defined as small enterprises with up to 5 staff, although many will be sole traders. They are operated by people who are entrepreneurial with a flair for overcoming challenging situations and developing new approaches.
1.04	By growing Micro-Care businesses the council are creating additional options for meeting the growing demands for care as well as expanding choice. It was hoped that the scheme would help to divert crisis in the care sector as a preventative measure, whilst delivering care which is efficient, effective and person centred. The pilot also aimed to provide opportunities to build resilience in communities through developing local, bespoke solutions to peoples care needs and help create sustainable careers in care.
1.05	<p>The project commenced in September 2019 with two full-time Micro-Care Development Officers who would both promote the scheme and support each new micro-carer through to start up and beyond to ensure they build good quality and sustainable micro businesses. In addition start-up funding was made available to each new business via the Foundational Economy Fund grant.</p> <p>The project has been really successful extending the quantity and quality of community based support for vulnerable people an estimate of the financial impact is as follows:</p> <p>Personal Care cost avoidance from April 20- October 21 - £14,189.17</p> <p>Support cost avoidance (LD etc.) from April 20- October 21 ranges from - £35,143.73 - £45,507.23 depending on the Supported living rate used for calculations.</p> <p>In total this would be £49,332.90 - £59,759.40</p>

1.06	<p>Key developments to date:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed the infrastructure including processes and procedures to support the growth of Micro-Care, from first enquiry through to business set up and delivery. • Devised a Quality Framework to ensure the quality of provision for Micro-Carers particularly those who wish to be directly commissioned by the council to deliver care and support. • Actively support all micro-carers through this quality process to start-up and beyond. • Successfully attracted ex-carers and people with no previous care background into becoming micro-carers. • Supported two micro businesses to become registered as Care Agencies with Care Inspectorate Wales and to support them to sign contracts with the council, recruit staff and take on rounds of care in areas of greatest need. • Promoted Micro-Care as a career via articles, reports, social media and a dedicated webpage within www.careatflintshire.co.uk. This contains both a directory of micro-carers for the public to access and key information and tools for new potential and existing micro-carers. • Networked with social care teams and officers to embed Micro-Care as a supply solution within the existing care structure. • Set up a Micro-Care Network. This meets regularly and is open to all micro-carers to provide information and peer support. • Established a Seed Funding Pathway that offers start-up funding to new micro businesses. To date the project has paid out £16,738.10 to 19 Micro-care Providers • Worked with our project partners at Social Firms Wales to devise and carry out a formal evaluation of the pilot. • Secured additional funding from the Welsh Government's Foundational Economy Fund for the financial year 2021/22. This has enabled the two Micro-Care Officers to continue in post until March 2022.
1.07	<p>Current Micro-Care Delivery</p> <p>At the end of September 2021, Micro-Care operational delivery is as follows:</p> <p>22 Micro-care Providers have been supported to set up, of which 18 of them were actively delivering services for the micro-care programme. Four providers have left the programme. One has had surgery, one has decided to go back into education and two have successfully established as Domiciliary Care Agencies and are registered with CIW. They now have off-framework contracts with the Council to deliver care as an agency with formal registration and regulation.</p> <p>Delivering to a total of 79 customers in Flintshire.</p> <p>Delivering an average total of 497 hours of care, support or wellbeing <u>each</u> week in July. Of the 497 hours, 420 were for personal care and 77 hours were for well-being type services (e.g. cleaning, shopping, and companionship).</p>

	<p>7 Micro-care providers have completed their quality framework evidence and are in a position to provide care directly commissioned from the council.</p> <p>Current breakdown of client need (Based on August 2021 figures): At the moment 43.3 % of micro-carer's clients are older people, and another 33.3% as unknown but believed to be older people as well, giving a total of 76.6%. They are delivering approximately 44% of their hours to this client group. 13% of the micro-care's clients have learning disabilities (or are within supported living programmes).</p>
1.08	To date, Micro-Care businesses are covering all areas in Flintshire. A number of care packages picked up by micro-carers were in rural areas where larger care agencies have limited workforce capacity. In addition micro-carers have responded to emergency situations to provide short term cover during the pandemic or support direct payments clients when a PA has left.
1.09	At the present time a further 10 micro-carers are in the process of setting up their business and going through our quality process. In addition, several existing micro businesses are recruiting staff to expand the supply of care they can offer.
1.10	<p>Evaluation Report</p> <p>As part of the pilot project Social Firms Wales have carried out an evaluation of the scheme to provide recommendations for further development. This evaluation report covers the Micro-care pilot initiative from October 2019 - 31st May 2021 – see Appendix 1.</p>
1.11	The evaluation concludes that Micro-care has enabled a flexible response within rural locations, particularly in filling the gaps where traditional care agencies would not have been able to accommodate. Micro-care agencies have been established in these areas to address a capacity issue. There are positive examples of micro-carer's becoming established in their locality which enables flexibility and strengthening community activity through networking within rural locations.
1.12	The Flintshire model of micro-care has shown to be cost-effective, expanding supply, and offering additional choice to people needing care and support, while creating localised employment opportunities. Having said this, there are specific areas to address and obstacles to work through for example procurement, non-regulation, and the ability to sustain a business model are all challenges going forward and could impact significantly on the initiative's future viability. The pilot is mindful of these challenges and have developed processes, frameworks and support for agencies to mitigate these risks.
1.13	<p>Conclusions & Recommendations</p> <p>The micro-care project is working well and achieving intended outcomes. Recommendations include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The support from a Micro-care Development Officer is highly valued and needs to be maintained.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Commitment of financial investment to sustain, protect, and further develop the project is essential. ✓ Seed funding needs consideration/refining with regard to award criteria, and level of funding or support provided. ✓ The Quality Framework should be recognised as a valuable resource that could be used in other areas across Wales. As it is in its early stages of development further work including its application, recognition as a safeguarding mechanism and developing the process for ongoing monitoring of micro-care agencies should be prioritised. ✓ Implementation of the direct commissioning model and monitoring to support continued improvement. ✓ To challenge the RISCA regulations with Welsh Government. It has to be recognised that the RISCA rules are high level policy legislation and will take time for any possible changes to be achieved. The rule of 4 however can be seen as arbitrary and as such should be reviewed. ✓ Build on the support available for micro-carers with appropriate training needs (care and business administration.) ✓ Re-evaluate the project in March 2022
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2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	Funding for this financial year is available through the Foundational Economy Fund and some remaining match funding budget in the original Invest to Save allocation. A budget pressure for 2022/23 is in place to continue with one development post and support the network of current providers.

3.00	IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT
3.01	The Micro-care project was risk-assessed as part of the decision-making process that led to the project being initiated. The Risk Assessment is being continually updated as the project progresses.
3.02	Under the five delivery principles of the Well-Being of Future Generations Act, a successful project that leads to the creation of a number of Micro-care enterprises can have a range of impacts which are currently being evaluated as part of an Integrated Impact Assessment for the project.

4.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED/CARRIED OUT
4.01	We have been working in partnership with Social firms Wales to complete an independent evaluation of the pilot programme. This has involved extensive consultations with a range of stakeholders including providers, service users, families and officers. (see Appendix 1 for the full evaluation report)

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	Appendix 1 - Micro-care Evaluation Report

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	N/A

7.00	CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS
7.01	<p>Contact Officer: Dawn Holt, Commissioning Manager Telephone: 01352 702128 E-mail: dawn.holt@flintshire.gov.uk</p>

8.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
8.01	<p>Alternative Delivery Model (ADM) - An operating model that is different from the current method of delivery of the service. In the context of the work being undertaken by the Council at present the main models are Collaboration, Shared Services, Independent Trading Company, TECKAL, Mutual, Cooperative, Social Enterprise, and Community Asset Transfer. These models range from those that are closest to public service delivery to those that are the most removed from public sector delivery. This scale also helps indicate (as a rule of thumb) the amount of control that is retained by the Council, and as a result the amount of transfer that is required from the Council to other agencies.</p> <p>Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) - The inspectorate for Care and Social Services formally known as Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW).</p> <p>Commissioning - The process of specifying, securing and monitoring services to meet people's needs at a strategic level.</p> <p>Direct Payments (DP) - Are as payment made by a local authority social services department to an individual who has been assessed as having care and support needs who wish to arrange their own care and support services.</p> <p>Grant Funding - Are a type of funding provided by the government, local councils and some private organisations. Organisations have to apply for the grant and demonstrate how they will meet the outcomes and conditions of the grant. Grants don't normally have to be repaid but will be subject to clawback in certain circumstances.</p> <p>Invest to Save Budget - An amount of money which the Council has agreed to invest in a service or a project, with a requirement to</p>

demonstrate efficiencies equivalent to the spend through the changes which are being made.

Micro-care enterprise- a sole trader or small company with up to 5 employees that delivers personal care or care-related type services.

North Wales Population Needs Assessment - This report is an assessment of the care and support needs of the population in North Wales, including the support needs of carers. It has been produced by the six North Wales Councils and Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB) supported by Public Health Wales, to meet the requirements of the Social Services and Wellbeing Act (Wales) 2014.

Social Enterprise- a business with conscience that is driven by a cause. It focusses on the impact it has on people or the environment and generates profits which it ploughs back into the community.

Seed-funding-Start-up funding that is made available to an enterprise in order to get it off the ground or to support it through start-up.

Quality Framework-Describes the accreditation process which Micro-care enterprises will need to be passed through before delivering services. The framework will consist of a number of quality checks designed to ensure Micro-carers will offer quality services to our citizens.