

Minutes



Performance Scrutiny Committee - People

Date: 6 June 2023

Time: 10.00 am

Present: Councillors W Routley (Chair), J Cleverly, C Townsend, B Davies, P Drewett, D Jenkins, M Al-Nuaimi, S Cocks, R Howells and D Mayer

In Attendance: Samantha Schanzer (Scrutiny Adviser), Sally Ann Jenkins (Strategic Director - Social Services), Natalie Poyner (Head of Children Services) and Caroline Ryan-Phillips (Head of Prevention and Inclusion)

Apologies: Councillors P Bright and Mary Ryan (Head of Adult Services)

1 Apologies

Mary Ryan (Head of Adult Services) and Cllr P Bright.

2 Declarations of Interest

None.

3 Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of meetings held **14th March 2023** were **accepted as a true and accurate record.**

4 Director of Social Services Annual Report - 22/23

The Strategic Director for Social Services presented the report.

Questions:

The Committee asked if there had been any financial support for arriving unaccompanied children.

- The Strategic Director informed the Committee that support is provided from the Home Office.

The Committee queried the 300 referrals a month to social services figure in the report.

- The Strategic Director noted most referrals are made by family members or neighbours. The Strategic Director detailed that a high number of referrals have no actions as they are referred to the correct services such as community connectors, carers support etc.

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- The Strategic Director noted the 300 referrals a month figure related to Children's Services but Adult Services received similar numbers.
- The Strategic Director informed committee that some referrals are unactionable due to refusal of service by persons that are sound of mind.

The Committee appreciated the pressure social services is under.

- The Strategic Director noted the privilege to help people and the positives in of job despite stress.

The Committee questioned what data is collected in reference to client voice.

- The Strategic Director noted hard data isn't specifically collected. The Strategic Director noted the feedback is recorded on their system but appreciated that it could be tracked and presented more efficiently.
- The Strategic Director highlighted that all staff within the service listen to those they are helping.

The Committee noted comments about the increasing number of residential care homes.

- The Strategic Director highlighted that older people with significant needs are placed into these types of homes which could be run by the Council, charities, or private landlords. The Strategic Director also noted that some care packages are offered in Newport via external companies. The Strategic Director highlighted that many domiciliary carers used are local businesses in Newport.
- The Strategic Director noted that as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, where sufficient care wasn't available, the need for residential care has increased.
- The Strategic Director informed the Committee that in Newport there is 1 outstanding package of care and highlighted that in Winter, packages of care need to be obtained faster following discharges from hospital due to the nature of the season.
- The Strategic Director detailed the work that the team does with the resident and family to make sure they feel comfortable in choosing what type of care they feel is most appropriate.

The Committee noted in a previous meeting the Strategic Director, the issue of data had arisen.

- The Strategic Director noted the challenge of distorted data as a result of the previous years and Covid-19 pandemic as well as Welsh Government requirements.
- The Strategic Director also noted that while there was a lot of data provided to Committee, without extensive knowledge of it, it may be difficult to understand.

The Committee agreed that it was difficult to find balance with social care packages and praised the team for their hard work.

The Committee queried whether the Short Breaks Service was what had been proposed to be cut in the previous budget meetings.

- The Strategic Director informed the Committee that there is a variety of short break services provided. The Strategic Director informed Committee that Spring Gardens, which the Committee referenced, was one of those services which had had a proposed cut but they were able to apply a different approach.
- The Strategic Director noted that some aspects of the Short Breaks Service are statutory and regulated service requirements must be balanced against budget savings. The Strategic Director noted the difficulty of this.

- The Strategic Director highlighted that they are working with Spring Gardens, to see what other services they can provide.

The Committee noted that reflection on previous years' underspends and overspends should inform budgetary decisions for the following year.

The Committee asked about the development of a regional approach to Children's Services and highlighted some Councils have saved money due to this approach.

- The Strategic Director noted the Regional Integration Fund funded many pieces of work, as well as the Adoption Service being Gwent-wide and contributed to by all 5 Local Authorities. The Strategic Director also informed the Committee other other pieces of work such as Advocacy for Children service and the Frailty Service which is run with the support of Local Authorities and the Health Board.
- The Strategic Director highlighted that some services aren't able to run more cost effectively on a regional level, and the importance of keeping a local presence. The Strategic Director noted that the population breakdown of Newport is slightly different to other councils and therefore it's important to work on what Newport needs.
- The Strategic Director raised that work is always been done to look out how things could be done better both regionally and nationally.

The Committee would like an update on Cambridge House, Forest Lodge and Rosedale.

- The Strategic Director noted work is ongoing at Forest Lodge with annexes currently being worked on.
- The Strategic Director detailed that Cambridge House is currently in the planning process and will likely for at least a year.

The Committee noted the importance of Prevention and Inclusion. The Committee asked what the difficulties were in consolidating teams into the service area.

- The Head of Prevention and Inclusion informed the Committee that teams had been in place for a year. The Head of Prevention and Inclusion noted the main focus being on organising the service as a whole, seeing what specific teams are working on and allocating work in a manner that doesn't overwhelm them. The Head of Prevention and Inclusion also noted that it was important to balance working with the teams on their current work but also planning for the future.
- The Head of Prevention and Inclusion detailed the goal of the service was working with families as early as possible in order to help reduce the escalation of needs.
- The Head of Prevention and Inclusion also noted within 1 week, the play service had 500 attendees which was an increase and due to better planning and coordination as enabled by the service area.

The Committee noted the age change has helped catch children at an early age and asked where the Community Development team is based.

- The Head of Prevention and Inclusion highlighted the Community Development team has had a shift in focus of what their roles will do, consultation was ongoing into this and that the community support should be from very young to very old.

The Committee noted issues with provisions for school holiday support such as Newport play scheme.

- The Strategic Director highlighted six-week full play scheme has never been provided and the huge demand for play scheme support.

The Committee noted asked for clarification on the term coproduction.

- The Strategic Director highlighted that coproduction is working together with those they support on how the service is provided.
- The Strategic Director noted this work can include a variety of spheres such as with the person, with other services etc.
- The Committee highlighted it may be helpful to clarify this term within the report.

The Committee highlighted that it was positive to see Oaklands Short Break Service as a case study within the report.

The Committee also queried that with Oaklands Short Break Service seeing an overspend, how do they stop it being at risk of future budget cut.

- The Strategic Director noted that this was used to cover support for children due to staffing issues in other areas however this has been resolved.
- The Strategic Director highlighted that the team is working to make sure a similar issue doesn't occur.

The Committee wanted to forward their appreciation for the work that Oaklands staff do.

The Committee noted in the service case study noted a word error on page 36.

- The Strategic Director informed the Committee that this will be corrected.

The Committee noted some underspend in the Short Break service.

- The Strategic Director highlighted the underspend is due to the inability to recruit in Short Break which has an effect on the provision of these services and their quality.

The Committee asked why vacancies weren't being filled.

- The Strategic Director referenced shortages across the UK in retention and recruitment within social services.
- The Strategic Director informed the Committee that recruitment and retention will be brought to Scrutiny at a later meeting as an agenda item.
- The Strategic Director noted that some areas in social care are stressful and poorly paid but reinforced that this was a national issue.

The Committee noted that information on demographics for those referred to the service was not included as it was on staff.

- The Strategic Director highlighted this could be included next year.

The Committee asked what is being done to bridge the gender gap in the social care workforce.

- The Strategic Director noted the gender divide in various workforces within the service such as those within management have a higher level of male employees.
- The Strategic Director highlighted that the service tries to cast the widest employment net possible through work streams and other methods.
- The Strategic Director highlighted that the team works with all levels of education, but due to the nature of certain jobs within the sector people have far more options of where to work which can cause issues.

The Committee queried the difference between stress and anxiety and other emotional illnesses as categories for absence.

- The Strategic Director informed Committee that a clarification could be provided by HR.

The Committee asked what was being done currently and what was being explored to best support the workforce.

- The Strategic Director highlighted that recruitment and retention was a national issue.
- The Strategic Director also noted that there are a number of schemes used by Social Services such as the use of Care First etc and staff are also offered clinical supervision for in-depth or complex issues.
- The Strategic Director highlighted that management is sympathetic and caring, not punitive.
- The Strategic Director finally noted appropriate flexibility training and development is offered.

The Committee asked whether staff are kept up to date on manual handling training.

- The Strategic Director informed the Committee that the relevant staff are.

The Committee highlighted the importance of reduced staff illness as well as supporting those in the most effective way possible.

The Committee asked how long staff support had been ongoing.

- The Strategic Director highlighted that some had always been there while some were newly implemented. The Strategic Director confirmed that this was always being reviewed to best serve staff.

The Committee asked how many staff leave the service due to burn out.

- The Strategic Director noted most staff leave for positive reasons such as retirement or promotion, not often due to burnout.
- The Head of Childrens Services noted Covid-19 had an impact on this as people re-evaluated their priorities.

The Committee expressed that staff loss due to retirement was also a loss of knowledge and experience and highlighted that part time offers for these staff should be looked at.

The Committee noted that the data was hard to understand without context and asked for the Strategic Director to draw their attention to relevant information.

- The Strategic Director noted that due to the nature of the data, it can be hard to comprehend. The Strategic Director informed Committee that the nature of contacts is lost in data, as their simplicity or complexity is not noted, only the raw figure.
- The Strategic Director noted page 69 which demonstrated a slow increase in residential care and low waiting list numbers and page 70 which demonstrated care being given quickly where applicable.

The Cabinet Member for Social Services noted change in technology as well as background support has an effect on data and service provision to hopefully deploy the workforce where it can be best used.

The Committee asked for more information regarding walking carers.

- The Strategic Director noted carers working near clients they work with are walking domiciliary carers and this was a small number of care providers.
- The Strategic Director highlighted there has been an increase in asylum seeking children, although the number of children looked after has decreased with the figure fluctuating between 370 and 380.

The Committee asked whether the tables on page 85 were a statutory requirement.

- The Strategic Director confirmed they were.

The Cabinet Member for Social Services noted staff are consulted on a recruitment, retention and support offers regularly and highlighted the importance of continually reviewing this with staff.

5 **Conclusions of Committee Reports**

- The Committee wanted to express their thanks to Social Services for their continued hard work.
- The Committee felt that the term “coproduction” when referring to care packages could be clarified within the report.
- The Committee recommended that service user data regarding information such as race, ethnicity, age etc should be included in the report so that they could better understand those accessing services.
- The Committee noted that reflection on previous years’ underspends and overspends should inform budgetary decisions for the following year.
- The Committee were content with the report.

6 **Scrutiny Adviser Reports**

The Scrutiny Adviser informed the Committee that a few items are still outstanding, but these are still being chased up.

The Scrutiny Adviser detailed the Forward Work Programme.

- The Committee were content with this Work Programme.

The date of the next meeting was noted to be **11th July 2023**.

7 **Live Event**

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