

Minutes



Performance Scrutiny Committee - People

Date: 4 December 2018

Time: 10.00 am

Present: Councillors D Williams (Chair), J Cleverly, J Guy, H Thomas, K Thomas, C Townsend and T Watkins

Co-opted Members : R Penn (Church in Wales)

In Attendance: Councillors P Cockeram (Cabinet Member for Social Services)

S A Jenkins (Head of Children & Young Peoples Services), J Harris (Strategic Director - People), D Cooke (Scrutiny Adviser) and L Davies (Governance Officer)

Apologies: Councillors K Critchley, R Hayat and J Watkins

1 Declarations of Interest

None

2 Mid-Year Service Plan Reviews 2018/19

Adult and Community Services Mid-Year Service Plan Reviews

The Service Manager for Adult and Community Services presented each of the five objectives individually and invited the Committee to ask relevant questions at that time.

Objective 1

- The Committee enquired whether the IAA Provider Forum had been implemented or was in progress, Members asked for an update on the objective. The Officer explained that the IAA Forum was linked to the Care Navigation Joint Forum, and that the Authority would be working closely with partners for better integration within the IAA service, the Officer went on to say that the process had been ongoing to establish key partners for the IAA services.
- A Member asked Officers if there were any other agencies such as Sight Cymru within the Third Sector Partnership. The Cabinet Member for Social Services replied explaining that the Authority were not aware of any other agencies such as Sight Cymru within the Third Sector Consortium, he also said that Sight Cymru Service had made a positive impact as previously there had been up to two years waiting for assessments.
- The Members enquired how the Authority managed and monitored an outside body. The Officer replied that the Authority looked at the level of service the outside body

provided to the Authority and citizens of Newport. The Officer explained that the Authority gathered information from visits with staff, monitored complaints, and spoke with Social Workers to ensure that contracts had been upheld. The Members also asked Officers what would have happened if failings to the service were identified. The Officer explained that the Authority had never experienced that scenario, however if that situation did arise then there were a number of measures and processes that would be implemented. These measures and processes included setting up an improvement plan, setting timescale for resolution, monitor the improvements, work with Social Services and the Safeguarding Hub, and if the issues still remained the Contract Department would be involved.

- The Committee expressed concerns over a historic event involving a Nursing Home that failed to provide the contractual service to the residents of the home. The Member asked what would the cost be if that situation were to arise again. The Strategic Director – People informed the Committee that this scenario was very infrequent, and that the Authority had only needed to engage with one domiciliary care providers about meeting their contractual obligations. The specifics included the robustness of their business model, and not the level of care. Officers agreed that an action point be made to capture any future safeguarding situation or issues that ever arose.
- Members asked the Officers how many domiciliary care providers operate within Newport, what checks and training were carried out to ensure the safeguarding of the service users. The Officers detailed there were 26 domiciliary care providers working within Newport. All staff must have a current DBS check, attend and maintain the appropriate level training, along with having business insurance. Members wish to know if the mandatory training included dementia awareness training. Officers explained that dementia training was a not mandatory requirement.

Objective 2

- The Committee congratulated the Officers for the drop in unoccupied bed days from 16.7% to 2%. Officers confirmed that two additional Social Work Assistants had been allocated to undertake assessments, which created greater capacity to facilitate timely admission and discharges. A Member asked about the WCCIS system data. Officers replied explaining that WCCIS was a new system, however there was no evidence to suggest that performance had declined.
- Members enquired about the In-Reach Project and what pathway was in place. Officers replied that a restructure of the re-ablement team had taken place, work practices had been reviewed to ensure an integrated and co-ordinated response to hospital discharge. The Officer further explained that continual monitoring of the impact of In-Reach on hospital discharge pathways was in place.
- A Member spoke about the elderly moving in and out of hospital, as the problem inevitably ended up back with Social Services. The Members discussed how there would have been a cost associated with this. The Officer explained how some of the reasons behind this were due to factors such as an increase in life expectancy and changes in society and culture towards the elderly. The Officer also commented about the 'Home 1st Initiative', which met every week across Gwent. The Regional Board attended along with the Welsh Government making funds available across Gwent to try to overcome the disconnect. The Officer explained that the 'Home 1st Initiative' had looked for the best use of resources. The Officer explained that there had been a slight disconnect between leaving hospital and Social Services visiting, but that no longer existed. The Cabinet Member for Social Services commented that the transformation fund would grow every year, and showed good results.

Objective 3

- Members requested information on the Peoples Commissioning Function. Officers responded by explaining the Peoples Commissioning Function improved systems within the Adult and Community Services department, and that expertise would be brought to Children and Young People's Services. The Authority would be able to apply consistency and challenge to make the appropriate improvements when purchasing and commissioning external services.
- Members congratulated the Officers on the hard work that had been put into Spring Gardens residential home, complimenting them on the level of activities and the general outlook of the centre. Members discussed the possibility of a future funding shortfall in domiciliary care by 2028. Officers responded that packages of care had become more expensive due to the complexity of care required by the service user and this was a trend that could continue. There would be a discussion on fees for next year, however Officers discussed that the cost needed to be fair, and must be sustainable for vulnerable people, a level of trust needs to be gained between the Authority and providers. Officers also commented on a possible Scrutiny visit to the 'Home 1st Initiative' team.

Objective 4

- Members asked the Officers if this Objective related to a professional Carer or aimed at family carers. The Officer replied to Member explaining that Objective four relates to all carers.

Objective 5

- Members commented on the Victim Hub in Blackwood, and if there were enough resources in the Gwent Provision, the Member also asked Officers about other responses introduced to Deprivation of Liberties (DoLs). The Officer replied explaining that there was nothing new to report, however there was increasing demand for the service. There was also a back log of assessments, and the Authority need more capacity to maintain the level of service. Officers explained that once safeguarding issues were identified it was important to support the victims and victim's family. The Officers confirmed that they would feedback on when the Newport Specific section of the Gwent Safeguarding website would go live.

Financial Analysis

- The Committee queried the Community Care Supported Living Packages that were nearly £1.9 million overspent, could more information be provided on the reason for that and what the service area would do in the short and long term to ensure that would not be an issue year on year? The Officers explained that the overspend would be made up of many factors, people were living longer, some with very complex needs and conditions which required a high level of care. Officers explained that the very hot summer had a very big impact on the budget, as the heat had caused a spike on services, which increased pressure on the Authority. The winter would also affect the budget, the Authority had anticipated a very bad winter, which would cause excess strain on services. The Cabinet Member for Social Services informed the Committee that half a million of the overspend included the Domiciliary Care workers wage increasing to meet national living wage.

The Chair thanked the officers for attending.

Children and Young Persons Mid-Year Review

The Head of Children and Young People Services presented each of the five objectives and financial analysis individually and invited the Committee to ask relevant questions at that time.

Objective 1

- Members asked the Officers to explain how they would see this improving the outcome for the children and families. The Officers replied explaining that the Integrated Family Support Team had put in place the redesigned reporting framework to ensure compliance with Part 9 of the Social Services Wellbeing Act. The structure had better links with schools for disabled children, as well as with parents which had been set up as a consultation tool for service improvement. The Cabinet Member for Social Services stated that the parents who had voiced their concerns over the transition from Children to Adult Services had been listened to and the Authority had taken on board their views. A Member congratulated the Officers on receiving an award from the Welsh Social Care for working with Barnardos.

Objective 2

- The Officers explained that Objective 2 was for Finance to establish the mechanisms for care leavers to no longer pay council tax. The Officers informed Members that the Welsh Government had taken the Council Tax non-payment on as an action itself, with a possibility of funding for Local Authorities. Members wish to know how care leavers being exempt from council tax was fair with when compared other members of the public who potentially had difficulties in paying council tax. The Officer explained the amount of care leavers would be a very low number and there were a lot of citizens with in the Authority that were also exempt from paying council tax.
- The Officers explained that as a Local Authority they have an increasing number of family care arrangements with support plans that were agreed with the court. These were largely children cared for under the requirement of the Special Guardianship Orders, the Authority were drawing together foster teams, offering support and assessment where family guardianships were in place. The Authority ensured that families had been supported properly once the guardian took over, in some cases the child had required additional support. Members asked what age range the children were when leaving foster care. The Officer replied that the age range varies, but had been around 25 years old, with a varying figure of children leaving foster care of 20-50 per year.

Objective 3

- The Officers explained to Members that the Authority had the responsibility to provide a safe placement for the children and young people of Newport. The Authority had received additional funding for residential care placements, it was explained that four children had been identified for a place in a current residential unit. The Authority had made a successful offer on a second residential unit for another four children. Officers explained that the advantages of the new residential units included; savings to the budget as there had been 30 children in Out of County placements, and that the children were nearer to home. The Officers explained about the introduction of RISCA (Regulation and Inspection of Social Care Act) which had been a new regulatory framework. Members were informed that in order to be fully compliant all Statements of Purpose had been reviewed, revised and all had been accepted.

- The Officers provided details on how the Authority had provided training to all carers, and had also offered a more sophisticated level of training to Foster Carers on managing allegations.
- Members asked about the financial support available for Kinship and Special Guardianship arrangements. Officers replied that Kinship and Special Guardianship were eligible to benefits; but there had been instances when the Authority had no knowledge of the family's prior arrangements in place, when the family had requested financial support. This had resulted in a not entirely a straight forward process.
- Members asked the Officers what challenges had been experienced when recruiting staff for the residential units. Officers replied that the recruitment of staff were advertised internally, with much consideration about what went into the advert. Officers explained that the response to the Job Advert was huge, with 70 candidates applying. The Officer explained that they looked for numerous qualities in staff, this included taking staff from other residential environments and offered a Qualification and Credit Framework qualification as an incentive. The Cabinet Member for Social Services commented on how the Welsh Government had looked at what Newport were doing with residential units, and the impact this would have on the children and young people. The Cabinet Member invited the Corporate Parenting Forum and Scrutiny Members to the residential unit, he also commented that there were around 150 Foster Carers in the area, each with around 2/3 children whom were pleased with the level of support offered by the Authority.

Objective 4

- The Committee asked the Officers to explain what had been put in place to prevent offending or re-offending. In the Officers opinion if a young person had access to and engages with education they are less likely to offend or reoffend. The Officer believed that this was due to the young person having aspirations to a life that did not include offending. The Officer continued to state that if young person is able to develop a positive relationship with another responsible adult in a one to one setting then they were less likely to offend. The same successes had been seen with peer engagement activities.
- Over the previous year an exercise had been carried out across the five Local Authorities to assess potential options for Gwent wide Youth Offending Service (YOS). The options for a regional YOS were being considered.

Objective 5

- The Officer explained to the Members that developing the Children's Charter to outline the Authorities support for all children across the city including the specific needs of the most vulnerable children. Work on the Children Charter had been led by the Councils Policy, Partnership and Involvement Team and discussed with Newport's Youth Council who would lead on its development and ensure an inclusive approach was in place.
The Officer also discussed the scoping of Children 1st Models across the UK, explaining to Members that the work had been undertaken by Millbrook Primary school and Barnardos, in conjunction with the Children 1st Team in Welsh Government.

Financial Analysis

- Officers were requested to explain why on the Number of independent Fostering Agency Placement per quarter and the Number of Out of County Residential Placements per quarter graphs there was a forecast drop back towards pre 2018 numbers of children and young people. As well as to provide evidence to support the forecast, and what mitigations had the Authority had in place if the forecast was incorrect? The Officer explained that the Authority would be seeing more young people move from Children Services to Adults Services. The Council were also trying to recruit more foster carers in a number of different ways, the number of foster carers was getting smaller year on year.

The Chair thanked the Officers for attending.

Conclusion - Comments to the Cabinet

The Committee noted the Mid-Year Review for Children and Young Peoples Services and Adult and Community Services and agreed to forward the minutes to the Cabinet as a summary of the issues raised.

The Committee wished to make the following general comments to the Cabinet:

1. The information provided by the Officers needed to be simplified to allow members of the public to be able to read and understand.
2. The format of the report needs to be improved, numbering actions could be one way of improving how Members engage and scrutinise the information.
3. The Heads of Service approach to completing the reports varied, a more consistent approach and presentation might allow for Members to scrutinise more effectively in the future.

The Committee made the following comments and recommendations relating to the Adults and Community Services Mid-Year Review;

4. The Committee requested additional information on a number of actions and areas of the report. The Strategic Director – People and the Scrutiny Advisor will establish a schedule of presentations for the New Year.
5. After the presentations the Committee Members will have the opportunity to visit the hospital to see how the Authorities partnership work with the Health Board works in practice.
6. The Strategic Director – People will provide feedback on the date the Newport specific - Gwent Safeguarding website is due to go live.

The Committee made the following comments and recommendations relating to the Children and Young Peoples Services Mid-Year Review;

7. It was noted that the Cabinet Member for Social Services invited Members of the Committee to visit the new residential home for young people before the first young people moved in.

The meeting terminated at 12.30 pm