

Minutes



Performance Scrutiny Committee - People

Date: 16 November 2021

Time: 4.00 pm

Present: Councillors W Routley (Chair), J Cleverly, Y Forsey, L Lacey, S Marshall, J Richards, T Suller, H Thomas, C Townsend and T Watkins

In Attendance: Sally Ann Jenkins (Head of Children & Young Peoples Services), Mary Ryan (Corporate Safeguarding Manager), Connor Hall (Scrutiny Adviser) and Samantha Schanzer

Apologies:

1 **Apologies**

None.

2 **Declarations of Interest**

None.

3 **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the previous meeting held 21st September 2021 were **accepted as a true and accurate record**.

4 **Mid-Year Review - Adult and Community Services**

The Head of Adult Services acknowledged that the report only reflected the last six months and highlighted that they were still dealing with the pandemic. The Head of Adult Services noted that the report had allowed them to refocus and prioritise workstreams to make sure they were what was required due to the pandemic. The Head of Adult Services noted that the number of referrals had remained steady, but referrals were more complex. The Head of Adult Services highlighted the increased activity in Adult Services within hospital sites and notably the Grange, as well as a reduction of staff available in both hospitals and in social care generally, with the lack of domiciliary care having slowed processes down. The Head of Adult Services highlighted the financial sustainability of care homes where there was a threat of other providers closing and staff shortages. The Head of Adult Services assured committee that they have been proactive in working creatively with providers to give them the resources necessary to keep them open.

Questions:

The committee asked:

- How has service user voice been used by Adult Services and have any changes been noted in said voice?

The Head of Adult Services highlighted the example of independent living for young people with learning or physical disabilities and how work had been done to hear their voices to improve their experience regarding building skills and learning. The Head of Adult Services also noted the importance of consulting individuals at every stage to ensure the optimal outcome for them regardless of what that is.

- Is there a plan B if there were any further closures of providers?

Head of Adult Services noted that staffing issues within domiciliary care could influence the packages that providers are able to give, and work was being done to ensure that everyone had the minimum required to continue working and were working to prevent future issues.

- Following the closure of the provider and rehoming of its residents, are families involved in these discussions?

The Head of Adult Services confirmed that families were involved and that they used this as an opportunity to revisit what would be best for the person at hand. The Head of Adult Services acknowledged that it was lucky that all 27 residents were able to be moved to a new location that was preferable to them and their families.

- Are companies able to help people with disabilities get into the workforce?

The Head of Adult Services confirmed that there were day opportunities available which was a part of care planning for the individuals and reiterated the importance of these for people with learning and physical disabilities. The Head of Adult Services highlighted the importance of recognising the interests of the individuals and ensuring that they are fully supported to do that as part of package. The Head of Adult Services noted that while there are various opportunities across Newport, the effects of the pandemic are still evident.

- How concerned was the Head of Adult Services at this stage with the upcoming Winter challenges?

The Head of Adult Services confirmed that they were at a crisis point in terms of the stability of provider services which had a direct impact on adult services. The Head of Adult Services highlighted that they must be smart with resources and look at creative ways to recruit, retain and meet the needs of staff, but acknowledged it was a risky situation.

The Cabinet Member informed committee that the Regional Partnership Board was looking at data already and were looking into increasing finances, improving the quality of service and care and other measures. The Cabinet member informed committee that there may be an announcement coming from Welsh Government regarding finance.

- How would social care in the present be addressed, what could be done to get out of the difficult situation?

The Cabinet Member acknowledged that it was a difficult situation as it wasn't just employing staff that was an issue, and that Covid infections were impacting staff availability. The Cabinet Member reiterated the hope for a Welsh Government announcement and highlighted the importance of employment packages to attract staff into the care sector.

- What chance is there of hitting the appointee-ship target?

The Head of Adult Services highlighted that it was running and effective in Newport for the citizens. The Head of Adult Services acknowledged that there was work still to be done as all efforts during the pandemic were put into supporting care services, but now they were able to, they were coming up with options and working more quickly on this piece of work.

- Would the target for the development of reablement and dementia services be met?

The Head of Adult Services felt that this would be a more difficult target to meet as they've had to repurpose many reablement services into reablement for people without dementia, and while difficult to achieve, the Head of Adult Services was hopeful it would be green.

- Would the implementation date for the Liberty Protection Safeguards be met?

The Head of Adult Services informed committee that this had kept being put back, and that they were waiting for the code of practice to be given and for the consultation to conclude. The Head of Adult Services assured committee that this time would be used to ensure staff had refresher training on the legislation.

- Are they on course to create a working group to review key jobs and descriptions across adult community services and deliver this by March 2022?

The Head of Adult Services informed committee that there hadn't been capacity to concentrate on this as planned but it was being reviewed as it had come up, in a "drip-feed" style rather than on a whole scale, and that while they were at 20% now, they should be on course to meet this.

- Would the development of a regional appointee-ship service through collaboration with other local authorities and partners be delivered by 2022?

The Head of Adult Services expressed the hope that it would be.

- The committee questioned whether this would be done regionally with one person leading it or by a team of people.

The Head of Adult Services felt that there was a need for local people to run the appointee-ship for it to be accessible for residents. The Head of Adult Services noted that while it may end up with a single person running it, the importance of determining who had the skills and how it would be managed locally was paramount.

- How did the Head of Adult Services see progression continuing regarding item 1 on page 27?

The Head of Adult Services noted that they were currently undergoing an accreditation and when achieved, it could be embedded across the workforce.

5 Mid-Year Review - Children and Young People's Services

The Strategic Director for Social Services highlighted the challenges faced in both service areas by workforces in public services, health, and social care due to the pandemic. The Strategic Director for Social Services highlighted the challenge faced by social care, and while not unique, noted the magnitude of these challenges going into winter. The Strategic Director for Social Services informed committee of the pressures faced by staff, and the challenge of retaining and recruiting staff, which The Strategic Director for Social Services assured committee was not a Newport-only issue, but UK-wide. The Strategic Director for Social Services assured committee that work was being done to address these concerns.

The Strategic Director for Social Services noted the forecast underspend present in the reports and highlighted that this was due to unusual circumstance within social care. The Strategic Director for Social Services emphasised that the budget reporting masked some issues like workforce issues as there was less spending on staff, as well as adult social care being unable to deliver some packages of care due to that staff shortage which would have cost a substantial amount, therefore making the saving "sad and unfortunate". The Strategic Director for Social Services also noted that multiple Welsh Government Covid grants had been received, with some spend being applied directly back to Welsh Government on a month-on-month basis, and planning for £3.5 million on grant expenditure for this financial year, which masks budgeting and finance issues. The Strategic Director for Social Services focused on the Children's report, noting the increase in contacts being made with Children's Services which reflected the difficulty of the pandemic for people. The Strategic Director for Social Services highlighted that these increased referrals placed staff under greater pressure and noted the increasing complexity in referrals made.

The Strategic Director for Social Services highlighted work done with unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, working in partnership with Cardiff to rehome those arriving in Kent and from port transfers, the piece of work being presented to Partnerships scrutiny tomorrow. The Strategic Director for Social Services noted that Newport had real options in being able to care for this group, offering positive services for good and strong care given the circumstances of their arrival.

The Strategic Director for Social Services noted the success seen with the MYST programme.

The Strategic Director for Social Services noted that Windmill Farm was moving forward with building and had a completion date in April, with staff being fully trained before opening.

The Strategic Director for Social Services felt that despite challenges faced, service provision had continued to be maintained, with work being done to innovate and hoped the report evidenced that despite the pandemic, Children's Services has been able to deliver services effectively and safely.

Questions:

The committee asked:

- Were there restrictions in offering a competitive salary?

The Strategic Director for Social Services said that budgeting was a restriction but felt that good wages were offered relative to neighbouring authorities. The Strategic Director for Social Services noted that recruitment was the issue at hand.

- What was going to be done to ensure underspend does not happen and that the money is used effectively.

The Strategic Director for Social Services felt that the most effective way to ensure both would be to employ staff. The Strategic Director for Social Services noted that plans were in place to improve this, but there was significant challenge as only short-term contracts based on grant funding could be offered.

The Cabinet Member reiterated the unusual circumstances and reminded committee that targets would never be perfectly achieved. The Cabinet Member highlighted that many authorities offered incentives to new staff when recruiting and felt that until wage equality was reached, recruiting in the care industry would be difficult.

- Could the Strategic Director for Social Services elaborate regarding family court cases and the delivery of children's services and how would it be improved.

The Strategic Director for Social Services noted that significant changes had to be made how they were managed, and restrictions being introduced delayed some areas in family court. The Strategic Director for Social Services noted that these were acute in private law rather than public but were mounting. The Strategic Director for Social Services highlighted that many challenges and issues were out of their control but were working to improve and expand preventative measures so that less cases had to go to court.

The Strategic Director for Social Services noted the pressure on the delivery of Children's Services as work is constant. The Strategic Director for Social Services reiterated the importance of working with preventative services, managing pressures, and looking at support families more effectively.

The Cabinet Member highlighted the mental health struggles of school children, noting that it was a growing issue and backlogs were being caused as a result.

- Had posts been advertised?

The Strategic Director for Social Services highlighted the extensive advertisements placed with support from HR, and noted the work being done to look at how to work with colleges to recruit. The Strategic Director for Social Services noted that Newport City Council was a part of Social Care Wales: We Care Wales which was working to promote social care being a good place to work. The Strategic Director for Social Services added that they also wanted to retain existing staff by being flexible and encouraging.

- Would any underspend go towards the care and welfare of staff?

The Strategic Director for Social Services noted that WG had made payments to staff before Christmas 2020. The Strategic Director for Social Services noted that they were looking at wellbeing improvements from grant money such as clinical or reflective supervision and informed committee that most additional grant funding was conditional.

- How successful had the advertisement to increase the pool of foster carers had been and what was the most successful way to attract foster carer?

The Strategic Director for Social Services noted that they were a part of Foster Wales which had included a TV campaign, but they had also advertised locally. The Strategic Director for Social Services felt that the best way was word of mouth and highlighted that the support and small gestures given by the authority was key for foster carer retention.

- How had Service User Voice been used by both adults and children and had any changes been noted due to said user voice?

The Strategic Director for Social Services highlighted the work done with Barnardo's to look at areas of work which has included looking at work done regarding exploitation and the interface between preventative and statutory services. The Strategic Director for Social Services highlighted the work done around child protection process wherein they spoke with staff and Child Protection conference chairs, parents and children involved in those systems which resulted in learning and needed changes being highlighted which are driven by the team and the voices of children and their parents.

The Strategic Director also highlighted work being done to avoid mothers losing babies at birth.

- Is the service area on course to meet targets of the child exploitation response model and if not, what are the potential risks?

The Strategic Director for Social Services assured committee that they are working with partners which can complicate it. The Strategic Director for Social Services highlighted the importance of delivering multi-agency meeting model and the exploitation tool kit. The Strategic Director for Social Services highlighted the exploitation social worker had made a significant difference with the knowledge and skills the social worker was able to share across the service area. The Strategic Director for Social Services explained that the reason for the amber status was that realistically challenges will always arise so they must remain realistic but are on target for the work they are doing.

- Whether targets would be hit for exploring the sustainability of options for early intervention protections within the preventions teams post for March 2021.

The Strategic Director for Social Services noted that initial funding was to March 2020 but was extended and thus would be able to operate the pilot for the whole of 2021-22. The Strategic Director for Social Services informed committee that this funding had come from the PCC and whilst recognising its success, continued funding was not guaranteed. The Strategic Director for Social Services noted that they have been able to be clear about the strong Police presence in the safeguarding hub, which has made a large difference in the management of referrals. The Strategic Director for Social Services noted that if additional funding could be secured then work could continue, but it was unlikely and therefore learning would have to be

taken forward into other pieces of work.

- How were the delays to the public law working group reform of family justice report affecting progress in improving issues?

The Strategic Director for Social Services highlighted that the report had come out in March 2021 and that the reason timescales were given was the actions for them to implement as this couldn't be done without the report, which was late. The Strategic Director for Social Services noted that a lot of work had been done nationally and locally in looking at how work is done across social work teams. The Strategic Director for Social Services highlighted the importance of reflecting on work done in pre-proceedings and services offered to families before court. The Strategic Director for Social Services highlighted the numbers of looked after children were coming down and linked to that, the number of children in care proceedings was low, largely due to advance work.

- How was that figure reflected in those the Local Authority Cares for versus those out of County?

The Strategic Director for Social Services noted that there has never been a huge number of children relative to total number out of county, apart from those just over/on county borders.

- Will we see a rise in contacts as covid continues?

The Strategic Director for Social Services noted it was inevitable and the service area was anticipating its busiest year.

- Are there any signs of businesses supporting work experience for young people?

The Strategic Director for Social Services noted that there was a lot of support with summer activities but highlighted that it was a difficult time for everyone, especially businesses.

- How many unaccompanied children would Newport be taking in?

The Strategic Director for Social Services informed committee that the report being presented at the Partnership meeting on the 17th of November 2021 would be forwarded as it was relevant.

The Strategic Director for Social Services said that they were working with Cardiff and Welsh Government, and were taking in 10 children, 8 of which had been already taken in. The Strategic Director for Social Services informed committee that once the 10 children were resettled, there would be time to look at taking in.

- Were any new partners/partnerships being used to consider new ways of working from the past year's experiences?

The Strategic Director for Social Services assured committee that partnerships with range of agencies and Barnardo's would be continued but that there were no specific new partnerships to mention. The Strategic Director for Social Services noted that there had been big challenges from March 2020 until summer 2021 as many agencies had stepped down services and challenges with agencies not visiting which still resonates today.

The Cabinet Member highlighted that while this was only a mid-year forecast, only one target was red, which was largely out of the service area's control, with the others being amber and green.

6 Conclusions of Committee Reports

The committee recommended:

- A Member's seminar to update Members regarding the 'crisis' in adult services.
- A visit to Windmill farm takes place.

An update be given on the Rosendale Annex

The committee commented that overall they were happy with the report and the answers given by attendees.

7 Scrutiny Adviser Reports

The Scrutiny Adviser noted the next meeting of this committee would start at 10am on the 30th of November 2021.

The meeting terminated at 6.14 pm