
CARE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 7/06/18

Present:

Councillors: Alan Jones Evans, Elin Walker Jones, Eryl Jones-Williams, Beth Lawton, Dafydd Owen, Dewi Wyn Roberts, Angela Russell and Cemlyn Williams.

Officers: Aled Davies (Head of Adults, Health and Well-being Department), Mannon Trappe (Senior Safeguarding Manager, Quality Assurance and Mental Health), Geraint W Jones (Customer Care Officer), Gareth James (Member Support and Scrutiny Manager) and Glynda O'Brien (Member Support Officer).

Cabinet Member: Councillor W. Gareth Roberts

Apologies: Councillors Annwen Daniels, Anwen Jane Davies, Siân Wyn Hughes, Cai Larsen, Rheinallt Puw and Peter Read.

1. ELECTION OF CHAIR

Resolved: To re-elect Councillor Eryl Jones-Williams as Chair of this Committee for the year 2018-19.

2. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

Resolved: To elect Councillor Dewi Wyn Roberts as Vice-chair of this Committee for the year 2018/19.

3. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

Councillor Eryl Jones-Williams declared a personal interest in Item 6 - Social Services Complaints Arrangements as his wife received care and he would withdraw from the Chamber should a specific discussion regarding home care issues take place.

4. URGENT ITEMS

No urgent items were received.

5. MINUTES

The Chairman signed the minutes of the meeting of this Committee held on 30 April 2018, as a true record.

6. SOCIAL SERVICES COMPLAINTS ARRANGEMENTS

A report was submitted by the Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Well-being outlining the administration of complaints by the Adults, Health and Well-being Department during 2017-2018, and it was noted that this Council was amongst the best in north Wales in terms of resolving and dealing with complaints.

Members were given an opportunity to scrutinise the contents of the report and they highlighted the following points:

(i) The examples of letters of thanks within the contents of the report were welcomed and they were extremely heartening, and it was asked what in the opinion of the Cabinet Member was the role of the scrutineers?

In response, it was explained that the submission of the report to the Scrutiny Committee was a transparent procedure and that it was possible for Members to offer comments on the contents that would be submitted as part of the report to the Cabinet. The Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Well-being was fairly confident that the Cabinet was challenging. The Head of the Adults, Health and Well-being Department added that the scrutiny role was key and there was an emphasis by national agencies to ensure that Members were aware of what is happening within the system and the type of complaints received.

(ii) It was asked if there were any trends / patterns to the complaints received?

In response, it was explained that if the relevant officer saw any trends, he/she would initially raise awareness of the issue with the Departmental Management Team and the Corporate Director. Quarterly reports were provided and there was a tendency for the complaints to relate to the shortage of home carers and national issues such as financial thresholds.

The Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Well-being added that the number of complaints was not important, but rather what was the exact nature of the complaint and what was done to overcome any problems. An assurance was given that the Department took every complaint seriously and sought to resolve any problems promptly.

(iii) It was asked if there was a more practical role for the Elected Members at a grass-roots level?

In response, it was explained that it would be possible for them to report on complaints directly to the Department following surgeries in their wards, and this could be added to the arrangement. However, it had to be considered that there were specific arrangements and processes to be followed.

(iv) It was asked how a complaint / enquiry was defined?

In response, Members' attention was drawn to the examples in Table 2 of the report and it was noted that many contacted Assembly Members / Members of Parliament and most involved the lack of available home care. The Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Well-being added that the Department was proactive and accepted any challenge and sought to resolve problems to the best of their ability. This was reflected in the number of complaints that had proceeded to step 2 or to the Ombudsman.

(v) Reference was made to the log of lessons to be learnt from complaints received by the Department, and specifically it was asked why two senior officers were dealing with a complaint?

It was explained that the reason was that the complaint in question dealt with more than one field and an assurance was given that the information would be discussed in the Management Team.

(vi) In terms of the lessons to be learnt log, it was suggested that it would be useful to note a specific target in the column 'target date for action' rather than 'as soon as possible' and state the reason if there was any failure to act.

(vii) It was explained that it was difficult to gather statistics / data as a great deal of the complaints were presented informally and were resolved immediately by the relevant teams.

(viii) It was asked why it was proposed to have a new complaints procedure?

In response, it was explained that this stemmed from the Welsh Government as a result of a review of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, with a request for suggestions from the North Wales Complaints Officers Group together with a consultation with users to try and find out the impact of the act. It was explained that North Wales officers met regularly and their meetings were an opportunity to discuss matters together. It was added that good practice would be considered and Welsh Government officers would meet with complaint officers every six months.

(ix) In terms of how many complaints are submitted by carers, it was explained that a fair number were received from relatives who are carers and it was acknowledged that it would be an idea in future to add a column for 'staff' enquiries / complaints'.

(x) It was noted that there was grass-roots concern regarding the process of dealing with and specifying disabled parking outside the homes of individuals and dealing with blue badges.

In response, the Complaints Officer explained that Siop Gwynedd was responsible for processing blue badge applications. It was explained that a Panel met every 3 months to discuss disabled parking spaces in front of houses, and approximately 20 requests were dealt with in each meeting. It was further explained that an increase had been seen in the number of applications and it had to be borne in mind that only around 10 parking spaces were available to be allocated every year for the whole of Gwynedd at a cost of £4,000 each. It was confirmed that every application would be dealt with on merit in accordance with the relevant criteria and the reasons why applications were unsuccessful would be explained to the individuals in question. To this end, it was noted that restrictions such as unadopted roads, yellow lines, restricted space and road safety were matters to be considered when dealing with applications.

It was added, that in accordance with the procedure that it was the individual who drove the disabled vehicle who was entitled to a parking space and not members of the family.

(xi) Concern was noted regarding the shortage of carers especially in Dwyfor and Meirionnydd, it was explained that the matter was receiving attention through the initial work on staff recruitment matters. It was explained that the situation changed from month to month with approximately 150 hours a week short in terms of internal and external provision in Meirionnydd and this was equivalent to approximately 4 / 5 full time posts. If the problem could be resolved then this would reduce the complaints. In response to an enquiry regarding employing part-time carers, the Head of the Adults, Health and Well-being Department noted that this could by all means be considered.

Resolved: To accept, note and give thanks for the report and positive responses as noted above, and to submit these to the Cabinet Member as part of his report to the Cabinet.

The meeting commenced at 10.30am and concluded at 12.05pm.

CHAIR

