
CARE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

13.09.18

Present: Councillor Eryl Jones-Williams (Chair)
Councillor Dewi Wyn Roberts (Vice-chair)

Councillors: R. Medwyn Hughes, Elin Walker Jones, Cai Larsen, Beth Lawton, Dafydd Owen and Catrin Wager.

Apologies: Councillors Annwen Daniels, Anwen Davies, Rheinalt Puw and Angela Russell. Also Councillor W. Gareth Roberts (Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Well-being).

Officers present: Gareth James (Members' Manager - Support and Scrutiny) and Eirian Roberts (Member Support and Scrutiny Officer).

Present for item 5 below:

Aled Davies (Head of Adults, Health and Well-being Department)
Ceryl Davies (Senior Manager - Complex Needs)

Present for item 6 below:

Learning Disabilities Services

Aled Davies (Head of Adults, Health and Well-being Department)
Ceryl Davies (Senior Manager - Complex Needs)

Children Services

Dilwyn Morgan (Cabinet Member for Children and Young People)
Aled Gibbard (Senior Operational Manager - Care Resources)
Iona Griffith (Children and Families Service Manager)

Education Service

Councillor Gareth Thomas (Cabinet Member for Education)
Einir Thomas (Senior Manager - Additional Learning Needs and Inclusion)

Observer: Sharon Eastlake, Care Inspectorate Wales

The Chair expressed his good wishes to Glynda O'Brien, a former Member Support Officer on her recent retirement after 40 years' service to the previous Meirionnydd District Council and this Council. It was agreed that a card would be sent to her on behalf of all members of the Committee, thanking her in particular for her dedicated service to this Committee and its predecessor, the Services Scrutiny Committee, over the years.

Iona Griffith, Children and Families Service Manager, was also wished well as she would be retiring at the end of this month after 40 years of service in Local Government.

Councillor Catrin Wager was welcomed to her first meeting of this Committee, also Eirian Roberts (Member Support Officer).

1. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST -

Councillor Elin Walker Jones declared a personal interest in Item 6 - Autism - Children Services and the Education Service - because:

- She worked for the central team, that was the equivalent of Derwen, at Besti Cadwaladr University Health Board.
- Her daughter worked as a Behavioural Analyst at Ysgol Pendalar.

She was not of the opinion that the matters were prejudicial interests, and she did not withdraw from the meeting during the discussion on the item.

2. URGENT ITEMS

No urgent items were received.

3. MINUTES

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous meeting of this committee held on 7 June 2018, as a true record.

4. UPDATE - LEARNING DISABILITIES SERVICES

Submitted - the report of the Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Well-being, updating members on the action plan stemming from the inspection of the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales and Healthcare Inspectorate Wales into the quality of care and support provided by the Learning Disabilities Service.

The Leader and the Senior Manager elaborated on the content of the report, and also responded to questions / observations from members. The following main points were raised:-

- Since the Active Support and the PBS Team is the first team of its kind in Wales, it was noted, once the work of gathering the data has been completed in March 2019, that a report outlining lessons from this model, the outcomes and how it was intended to be developed in future with other counties would benefit the Committee.
- Close and positive collaboration between the service and the Health Board was welcomed.
- It was noted that, as regards the weaknesses, the relationship with the specialist occupational therapy services needed to be improved and refined in addressing the needs of adults with more complex and challenging learning disabilities. Recruiting information and advice officers to the new Preventative Team that would come into force in April 2019, would also need to be considered.
- It was noted that the service was addressing the financial challenge through a combination of factors, including collaboration with external providers to look at every opportunity to submit grant applications, identify over-provision, review every case the service supports and consider out of county placements.
- The service's vision and the development work taking place with Dr Sandy Toogood from Bangor University was welcomed.
- In response to an enquiry into the number of applications for support and assistance that were turned away and why, it was explained that, unlike the historical arrangement where people were turned away if they did not fit into a specific category, the needs would now be met in alternative ways. It was noted that the figures could be looked at in more detail to see whether there could be figures about people who were turned away. It was believed, however, that if needs did exist, they would be met, either by the Learning Disabilities Service or by the Adults Service. It was added that discussions about strengthening the arrangements for those adults where an element of risk existed but who would not necessarily need specialist support were taking place. It was further noted, when

considering the service's data, that information could be found to answer the questions raised by the member and the discussion could be continued with her.

- Staff members who worked during their own time to assist with groups and evening social opportunities, mainly the cookery groups, were thanked. However, the question was raised as to why that happened in the first place and whether there was a role for the third sector to assist with these kinds of activities.
- It was noted that the Audit and Governance Committee had looked at the backlog of DoLS assessments and had given the Department a clear message about the need to deal with cases promptly. It was also understood that some social workers were already qualified to carry out DoLS assessments before the recent training and it was asked whether those individuals conducted assessments. In response, it was noted that the department was attempting to ensure that the resources were being allocated to deal with the assessments, especially to give priority to the urgent cases, but that this remained a very challenging field in Gwynedd, as in almost all other Local Authorities. Approximately 30 officers were now able to carry out the assessments, including those who had long since received training. Considering the questioning at this Committee and at the Audit and Governance Committee, because of the risks involved, the Head agreed to inform the Chair and Vice-chair on progress in this field.
- The Department was asked to share information with the Committee about the multi-disciplinary Transformation Group.
- The work that had been carried out over the past two and a half years to address the recommendations in the review of the service was welcomed. The Committee was persuaded that the work was moving in the right direction but, at the same time, it acknowledged that much work still needed to be done.

5. AUTISM

Submitted - the report of the Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Well-being, the Cabinet Member for Children and Families, and the Cabinet Member for Education elaborated on the current services in the field of Autism and the plans to develop them over the coming years.

Since the work was taking place across a number of services and as they were planned and maintained by three Departments within the Council, the three Departments provided separate reports.

The Cabinet Members and officers expanded on the content of the reports, and also responded to questions/observations by the Members.

(A) Learning Disabilities Services

The following main points were noted:-

- Concern was expressed that the needs of adults with autism, but who did not have learning disabilities, were not being met and that autism was being discussed under the learning disabilities services. Most people with autism did not have learning disabilities and there was now a move toward considering autism as a condition rather than a disability. Furthermore, everybody had a contribution to make and it was important to promote the skills of each individual. In light of the fact that the Autism Bill was currently being discussed by the Senedd in Wales, the Council would have to take seriously the needs of people with autism, and treat these needs differently henceforth. In response, it was noted that the Learning Disabilities Service took these needs seriously. It was confirmed that autism was not a separate

service within the Adults, Health and Well-being department at present. It was believed, however, that it was currently located where the expertise existed to deal with complex cases within the Departments, and that this was where coordination across the Department and contact with other Departments took place.

- It was noted that there was a lack of support for people with less profound and less long-term conditions and the importance of supporting adults before they became isolated or before they found themselves in a situation where they needed professional help or medication was emphasised. It was also noted that early intervention saved money in the long term and reference was also made to the lack of mental health experts in the Health Service.
- The view was expressed that the Council should employ an autism officer to be a point of contact for families and who would be able to collaborate with the third sector. It was also suggested that information should be included on the website about which resources, groups were available. In response, it was noted that a support worker had been appointed through the IAS Project to work in Gwynedd. Also, as requirements changed, and more data emerged about things the Council needed to do, the Department would continue to consider what exactly to provide. This could, eventually, lead to the need for a coordination officer or the like, but the Council had not yet reached this point.

(B) Children's Service

The Cabinet Member took the opportunity to thank Councillors Beth Lawton and Angela Russell for their contribution to the performance challenge meetings and to the Chair for his part in the report on the recent audit of the service.

The following main points were noted:-

- It was noted that one of the current shortcomings was the lack of resources which meant that there was inconsistency across North Wales on the structure of the Neurodevelopmental service established for children with autism across Wales and that waiting lists were longer. Some resources had been transferred from the services for disabled children to the new service that affected Derwen, and any intervention was dependent on short term grant funding. Another shortcoming was that only health staff were employed / seconded to the Neurodevelopmental service and that Education had very little time to contribute to the arrangement. The service had no social workers, which meant that families were not receiving carer assessments and support services, etc. and a group of children and young people with autism existed that did not receive much service beyond the diagnosis. Services also lacked resources in terms of the time of clinical psychologists, with waiting times of over a year in some parts of North Wales. There was also a clear lack of resources to develop short break resources further since the service's budget had already been reduced through the Gwynedd Challenge process.
- It was noted that the Council could not afford to cut more services for children and their families since the problems were long term and this was the most fragile cohort of our society.
- It was emphasised that a Children and Families Service Manager was a key post within the service; and in order to ensure continuation, a plea was made to retain the post after Iona Griffiths, the current post-holder, retired at the end of the month.

- The Derwen staff were congratulated and thanked for their excellent work.

(C) Education Service

The following main points were raised:-

- It was asked whether awareness should be raised in schools about autism so that interventions could take place at schools where children were low on the spectrum. In response, it was noted that a training programme was being developed for schools and that it was part of the new strategy relating to additional needs and inclusion.
- An enquiry was made about the future of the Autism Centre on the Ysgol Coed Mawr site as a result of closing that school as part of the plan to modernise education in the Bangor area. In response, it was explained that the hope was to find another location for the centre within another school building in Bangor. As it was not possible to confirm the situation at present, the Cabinet Member agreed to raise the matter and bring the answer to the local members in Bangor. Concern was expressed that members did not know about the unit in Coed Mawr and that it was not, therefore, possible for them to evaluate its importance when considering the plans for schools in the Bangor area.
- The vision of placing the child at the centre was praised. Yet, the question was raised as to how this could be reconciled so that every child was given the same opportunity. Concern was raised that several families who entered the process mentioned very different experiences - some failed to gain access to the service because the school would not accept that a problem existed, others were on a waiting list and were not getting support as they had not been given a diagnosis. In response, it was noted that the coordinator and head teacher had a duty to identify the children, with the assistance of the educational psychologist, and to work through that process. There was a process of grading and of identifying, at the secondary level also, in addition to a specific and comprehensive training programme. In terms of reconciling and monitoring, the service had created a monitoring programme that would be a way of sharing good practice, and four quality officers were responsible for reconciling the service the department and schools provided for pupils.
- A question was asked as to how success was measured. In response, it was noted that Estyn would be used to monitor the schools' provisions and that the progress of the pupils would be measured against the Therapeutic Outcomes Measurement, which looked at soft skills, and this would be reported back to the Management Board.
- It was asked whether it would be possible to arrange training for parents through Skype. It was noted in response that, although it would be possible to arrange general training through Skype, the type of training provided for parents would usually be more in-depth and that Skype would not be suitable.
- It was noted that the lack of follow up and support for parents following diagnosis fell on the school psychologists and special teachers, and that the question of providing support for parents would have to be put to the Health Board. From the child's point of view, it was noted that the basis of the new strategy was that the Education Service intervened early by looking at the needs of the child, rather than the condition, and prepared an individual development plan that met the needs of the child and not the diagnosis. In response to a comment suggesting that this did not happen in every case, it

was explained that this was a very new and innovative strategy. It would take time to rationalise the service across the whole county, but that was the service's aim.

- A more comprehensive report was requested for the Committee, which detailed the numbers of children receiving out of county education, the number of children who did not attend school and who had autism / did not have autism along with information about special schools.
- It was asked whether there was a waiting list to see an educational psychologist. In response, it was noted, although a clinical psychologist had to be seen for a diagnosis to be given, it was not necessary to see an educational psychologist to obtain the provision under the new arrangement. Schools liked the new arrangement as it was easier for them to raise matters under their own school, but parents were familiar with the old arrangement of seeing an educational psychologist and they did not always understand that education differed from health. It was also noted that the Council had a full and fairly young team of educational psychologists who were able to conduct assessments through the medium of Welsh.
- In response to an enquiry, it was confirmed there was good collaboration in the field of autism between the three departments. Big steps were being taken in the collaboration with the Health Board, with the Alltwen project being a catalyst for that with much discussion and consideration given to problems from the user's perspective.

The meeting commenced at 10.30am and concluded at 1.10pm.

CHAIR
CHAIR