

CABINET CYNGOR GWYNEDD



Report to a meeting of Gwynedd Council Cabinet

Date of meeting:	13 October 2020
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Dafydd Meurig
Liaison Officers:	Aled Davies (Head of Adults, Health and Well-being Department)
Contact Telephone Number:	01286 679003
Title of Item:	Adult Care Services Workforce Plan

1 THE DECISION SOUGHT

The Cabinet is requested -

- to approve the allocation of up to £375,000 of a one-off resource (analysed in the table in section 4 of the report) to the Adults Department budget 2020/21, together with a further one-off resource of £390,000 to the 2021/22 budget, with the exact sum of the allocations to be reviewed at the end of the relevant two financial years.
- to support the proposal for the expenditure of the above additional budget on the cost of employing the workforce beyond the normal staffing budget levels, in response to the inevitable increase in demand for a social care service to safeguard the people of Gwynedd and to fill staffing gaps that appear as a result of Covid19.

2 THE REASON FOR THE NEED FOR A DECISION

2.1 There is a need to increase the size of the care workforce in the Adults field in response to the workforce shortage to ensure the continuation of the service in the short term, and to be able to plan and respond to the second wave of the Covid19 virus that may strike.

3 INTRODUCTION

3.1 The Adults, Health and Well-being Department has prepared a Workforce Plan to summarise workforce issues that require specific attention as a result of the Covid19 pandemic. The purpose of this report is to summarise the main messages from that plan, and to request that the Cabinet approves expenditure to address possible workforce cost elements the Council may face.

4 THE RATIONALE AND JUSTIFICATION FOR RECOMMENDING THE DECISION

4.1 Over the last six months, since the start of the Covid 19 pandemic in the UK, care providers in Gwynedd (internal and external sectors) have coped extraordinarily well to ensure service continuation. Several factors have contributed to this, for example:

- Use of agency staff
- Additional new appointments to the organisation (e.g. via the Covid Jobs Team and the Covid19 workforce database established in March 2020)
- Fewer residents in the Council's residential care homes
- Some day care staff redeployed to other services
- Care service managers have undertaken front-line work
- Usual staff have worked additional hours
- A very low level of absences due to leave.

4.2 However, we know that there will be considerable pressure on care services that will make the workforce position very vulnerable. The Workforce Plan has considered the impact of the following on the workforce's needs:

- Reopening closed day and respite services
- Recommencing care for those who were supported by their families or friends for a period
- Absences amongst the workforce as they were ill with Covid19, shielding or having to self isolate.
- Securing a sufficient back up workforce to allow those who did not have any leave, or not much, between March and July, to take annual leave.
- Waiting lists for domiciliary care increasing, and pressure intensifying to offer domiciliary care to allow people to leave hospital
- The requirements of the 'National Rehabilitation Framework'(a document prepared in direct response to the Covid19 situation to plan services for people who would require care as a result of the virus)
- The need for sufficient staffing levels if a surge capacity was required to care for people who are ill, or who had been ill, with Covid19.

4.3 The following paragraphs expand somewhat on the aspects the Cabinet is requested to approve expenditure associated to them. Securing finance will allow the Adults, Health and Well-being Department to respond pro-actively to seek to ensure a sufficient workforce to face the challenge that is likely to exist over the next few months. This, in turn, would ensure that we address our purpose, namely 'helping people to live their lives how they wish to live', and also enable us to deliver our statutory duties in terms of providing care services.

Workforce absences due to Covid19 illness

4.4 A key factor to consider is the risk that staff can be absent as they are ill with Covid19, or having to self isolate. Analysis work has been undertaken, based on national data modelling that seeks to give the 'best estimate of the worst scenario'.

4.5 Currently, sickness absences levels due to Covid19 amongst the internal care workforce are less than 0.5%. 4.4% of the workforce have been shielding, but the majority are now back at work.

4.6 The Adults, Health and Well-being Department believes that it is reasonable for the Council to plan on the basis of absences due to Covid19 at levels of between 1% and 2% of the care workforce at different times during the current financial year. It is impossible to know exactly what the situation will be; however, what was seen during the first wave of Covid cases give a basis to this finding.

4.7 The best projections show that it is necessary to identify **£60,000** during this year (2020/21) in order to be able to backfill absences due to Covid19 illness. According to our modelling work, the worst case scenario shows that the staffing gap to be filled due to Covid19 sickness could be somewhere between 5.3% and 6.7% at its worst. It is therefore important to note that this £60,000 is the most realistic possible estimate of the additional cost, rather than a figure that completely eliminates the financial risk.

Allowing the care workforce to take their annual leave quota

4.8 As noted above, one of the reasons for the success in maintaining core services over the last few months was the fact that much less leave had been taken by members of staff.

4.9 A detailed study of the number of days' leave taken over the same period in 2019 and 2020 was undertaken. This indicated that the equivalent of 18 persons working for 20 hours a week were required until the end of the financial year, for the usual workforce to be able to take their full quota of leave.

4.10 In order to ensure that the workforce is available to backfill for the staff who need to take leave, it is necessary to identify **£135,000** of one-off funding this year.

Secure a surge capacity to respond to the demand for care due to Covid19

4.11 The Council has a specific plan to respond to the increase in demand for care that may face us as a result of Covid19. The first steps of this plan would be to open additional beds in three of our internal residential care homes, and then open care centres at Gwersyll Glanllyn and at Plas Menai.

4.12 By using national modelling data we can make projections regarding when we would have to implement this plan. Plans have been prepared and calculate the number of staff required at different periods.

4.13 It is hoped that all the additional capacity will not be required for more than a few weeks; however, we know that the likelihood is that we will see the impact of Covid19 on the demand for care for months, if not years. It is considered that an acceptable level of resilience for the service needs to be secured and sufficient flexibility to be able to face the increasing need for rehabilitation services. In order to attract the necessary workforce, it is recommended that opportunities need to be offered to people for permanent jobs with the Council.

4.14 In order to maintain services to a higher number of people within three of the Council's care homes across a wide geographical area, the equivalent of 30 additional members of staff working 20 hours a week will be required. This would be at a cost of **£120,000** in this financial year, and **£390,000** in 2021/22.

4.15 At the end of March 2022, it will be necessary to review the workforce size alongside the demand. It is anticipated that the demand will increase due to County's demographic nature (even if Covid19 had not struck). Also, we know that a high percentage of the current workforce are nearing retirement age. The various factors suggest that it is very unlikely that we will need the workforce for the longer term.

4.16 In addition to the 30 persons above we would recruit on permanent contracts, projections note that we would require between 16 and 62 members of additional staff (based on working 20 hours a week) to maintain surge capacity services. The exact numbers would vary according to the level of demand and the number of cases of people with Covid19 that require care.

4.17 The Adults, Health and Well-being Department intends to secure a temporary workforce from different sources including recruitment, paying for agency staff and sourcing staff from the health workers' bank. The Cabinet is requested to approve expenditure of up to **£60,000** up to the end of March 2021 towards the cost of this workforce.

4.18 If an additional workforce was required above this, the intention is to take measures to train and re-locate staff who work within other areas of the Council. National modelling tools project a period of around 2 months when we would see a sharp and sudden increase in cases. We will need to keep a close eye on the exact level of demand and the need for staff so that we can adjust our plans on a timely basis, bearing in mind the need for time to train and prepare the workforce for this particular kind of work.

Summary of workforce needs and associated costs

4.19 The following table summarises the workforce needs the Cabinet is requested to approve expenditure for them, to address the specific steps. Please note that the costs have been estimated based on £12.50 per hour, namely the internal employment costs (including national insurance and pension). The cost could be somewhat higher if it was necessary to appoint for extended periods, to address costs such as sickness and leave, or if it was necessary to pay an agent for staff. It could also be somewhat lower, e.g. if it is not necessary to pay pension contributions:

	Number of staff working 20 hours a week we would likely need	Finance that we request the right to spend up to 31.3.21, on a one off basis (£)	Finance that we request for the right to spend during 2021/22 to fund permanent contracts (£)
Absences due to Covid19 illness	Between 11 and 22 at any time	60,000	
Ensure that the care workforce can take their quota of annual leave	18	135,000	
Secure a surge capacity to respond to the higher demand for care due to Covid19:			
1. Opening additional beds in three internal residential care homes	30	120,000	390,000
2. Opening care centres at Gwersyll Glanllyn and Plas Menai Centre	Between 16 and 62 members of staff at any time	60,000	
TOTAL		375,000	390,000

5 NEXT STEPS AND TIMETABLE

5.1 If this expenditure is approved, it is intended to take urgent measures to implement a recruitment campaign to permanent and temporary jobs, and seek staff from various sources that may be available to undertake care work for short periods.

5.2 It is expected that all the expenditure referred to in this report will have been undertaken by the end of March 2022.

6 ANY CONSULTATIONS UNDERTAKEN PRIOR TO RECOMMENDING THE DECISION

6.1 No specific consultations have been undertaken; however, all the data for the Workforce Plan has been gathered by and discussed with the internal and external care providers in Gwynedd.

Local member's views

Not relevant

Views of the statutory officers

The Monitoring Officer:

I note the comments of the Chief Finance Officer in relation to the sources for financing the plan in relation to the next Financial year. I am satisfied that this is an appropriate way forward.

The Statutory Finance Officer:

I confirm that the expenditure proposed in the above report is in addition to the expenditure projections outlined in the Revenue Budget Review 2020/21 report on this Cabinet meeting's agenda.

We will seek to claim the vast majority of the £375,000 in 2020/21 from a specific fund earmarked by Welsh Government to assist local authorities to pay higher costs as a result of Covid-19. There is no information about a similar fund by 2021/22, and strict arrangements limit 2020/21 claims. Therefore, the Cabinet will need to underwrite the whole of £765,000 (£375,000 + £390,000) from Council balances for now, until we receive confirmation of how much Covid-19 grant can be claimed.

It is not usual for the Council to allow services to fund permanent jobs (employment contracts) from a one-off budget. However, I support the proposal in these unique circumstances, due to the demand as a result of the Covid-19 crisis and difficulties to recruit to temporary contracts as well as a comparatively high turnover in relevant care jobs that mitigates the long term commitment.
