

HEALTH, SOCIAL CARE & INCLUSION SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL

29 November 2007 at 6.00 p.m.

Panel Members present

Councillor Oliver (Chair)
Councillor Ault (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Barton
Councillor Bird
Councillor Micklewright
Councillor Paul
Councillor Pitt
Councillor Robertson

Officers present

Sue Byard	Assistant Director, Strategic Housing
Karen Reilly	Interim Head of Adult Services
Steph Simcox	Head of Finance, SC&I
Mark Wade	Housing Standards and Improvement Manager
Tracey Simcox	Acting Lead Officer, Supporting People
Colin Teasdale	Performance and Scrutiny Officer

62/07 APOLOGIES

Apologies for non-attendance were submitted on behalf of Councillor Woodruff and Councillor McCracken.

63/07 SUBSTITUTIONS

There were no substitution(s) for the duration of this meeting.

64/07 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP

There were no declarations of interest or party whip identified at this meeting.

65/07 DISABLED FACILITIES GRANT (DFGs)

Mark Wade gave the panel a presentation (annexed) on DFGs, including historical overview, actions to date and their impact, current challenges and planned actions.

Councillor Bird asked if the issue was one of resources or capacity.

Sue Byard replied that the issue was finance; more capital budget would be spent if granted as they do have the capacity to carry out more adaptations if the finance was there.

Councillor Bird suggested that capital should be targeted at the lower end so as to wipe out the waiting list.

Councillor Robertson commented that the problem with priority waiting list is that you would need to re-prioritise the lower end as it would be difficult to justify diverting resources away from high priorities.

Sue Byard said that, as the presentation had indicated, they were looking at the option of splitting the waiting list into the three priorities of high, medium and low, with different teams working on each, this should help deal with the lower end of the waiting list without affecting those at the higher ends.

Councillor Bird said the problem was that after an OT assessment was carried out, by the time a service user got to the top of the waiting list that assessment had become inaccurate as the illness had progressed. This was raising aspirations and leading to greater frustration.

Karen Reilly commented that she agreed with this but that their success in one area, in clearing the OT waiting list, had led to a bottle neck in another service but that holding off on OT assessment just to reduce expectations was not an option.

Councillor Bird asked when the schedule of rates was put in place, what its total value was and whether they could cut this down.

Mark Wade responded that the schedule has been phased on over the last 18 months, he couldn't tell them the exact value but that he had been advised by the procurement manager that the current contract was as tight as it could be and they would not be able to cut this any further.

Councillor D Pitt asked why they couldn't directly employ a 'man in a van' to carry out a lot of these jobs.

Sue Byard said that they did have a handy person scheme to carry out minor work but that grants over £5000 restricted by regulations and they had to get quotes for these.

Councillor Robertson asked whether there was an option to join up with their near neighbours to jointly procure work and so drive down costs.

Mark Wade responded that joint procurement was currently being piloted in another area and so in future years this was indeed a possibility.

Councillor Oliver said that where people had been quoted a cheaper price directly for work, could they not use this quote rather than the more expensive quote through the council as he understood other authorities did allow this flexibility.

Mark Wade said that this potential was already there and made clear to people, though it was important to note that the total cost was not just the builder cost and there were also agency fees and architect fees in the council quote.

Councillor Bird believed that there was still scope to go back to the schedule of rates and save money, he suggested employing a quantity surveyor to assess the work against the quote as contractors seems to drive their prices up just because it was the council, it was important to get the most of the money available.

Mark Wade said that his officers did check work carried out but there may be scope to do an audit on sample of cases using a quantity surveyor and he would take this back.

Councillor Ault asked about how many people carried out work themselves.

Mark Wade said that people were given information on options available to them including the likely waiting times so that they could make informed choices on whether to wait or use their own resources or charity etc.

Councillor Pitt asked if they had any short term adaptations through a lease that could be a cheaper option in some cases.

Mark Wade said that this was in place for minor adaptations and was done through the equipment stores.

Councillor Micklewright asked if they took back items like Zimmer frames as she had heard of these being refused when people had tried to offer them back.

Karen Reilly confirmed that they did have a retrieval policy in place for equipment.

Councillor Bird asked if it was possible to have a report on much the residential care budget could be reduced by carrying out more adaptations to help people live at home.

Steph Simcox said that did had done a review on 16 clients who could move home but the time taken to do this across everyone would be rather too time intensive for the benefit they would get out if due to the relatively low numbers. However social workers did think about DFGs at the time of assessments and reviews as a way of avoiding, or moving out of residential care.

Councillor Oliver said that two clear lessons came out of this debate, one on the budget pressures and need for cabinet to supply extra resources and secondly on ensuring they keep looking at ways of getting even better value for money out of what resources they did have.

Resolved

That the Health, Social Care and Inclusion Scrutiny and Performance Panel recommend:

- That extra resources are made available to tackle the adaptation waiting list
- That officers continue to explore ways of improving the value they get from existing resources

66/07 Supporting People Improvement Towards Excellence Plan

Sue Byard introduced the report (annexed) and welcomed any questions from the panel.

Councillor Bird commented that a lot of effort had obviously gone into this report and that officers should be commended for their good work, he felt it was an excellent plan for a very important service.

Councillor Pitt commented that whilst they were told risk management takes place on this, and other plans, they were never told the results of this and felt this was perhaps a gap. Otherwise he felt it was an excellent report.

Councillor Oliver asked what the next steps would be.

Sue Byard said that this draft would now go to cabinet for their approval and that regular monitoring of the action plan would be done via the performance boards and this will be reported through scrutiny. Councillor Oliver asked what format the action plan monitoring plan would take as he felt that this report would be rather too long to effectively scrutinise every time.

Sue Byard said the monitoring would be an exception report highlighting areas where there had been any slippage, as per the usual format.

Resolved

That the Health, Social Care and Inclusion Scrutiny and Performance Panel:

- note the report and the good work of officers in delivering this
- agree to receive regular monitoring updates on progress with the action plan

67/07 6 MONTH PERFORMANCE UPDATE

Brandon Scott-Omenka introduced the report outlining the 6 month performance update of the directorate.

Councillor Bird commented that whilst there were a few reds on the report that needed looking at there did seem to be more greens than previously which suggested they were moving in the right direction.

Councillor Oliver ran through the red measures on the scorecard and asked for officer comment on each.

(D54 BV56) Percentage of items of equipment and adaptations delivered within 7 working days. Karen Reilly said this target had been consistently green but it had been hit by staffing issues over the summer.

(D55 BV195) Acceptable waiting times for assessments. Brandon Scott-Omenka said that this PI had received a lot of focus, they were now reporting on this monthly and there had been a big improvement in the last 2 months, the drag on the indicator was the performance at the start of the year when the new system was being put in place.

(D75) Practice Learning. Brandon Scott-Omenka commented that this indicator had shown being improvement but they would not meet the target which was why it was still red.

(PAF B12) Unit cost of residential care, nursing care for all client groups plus intensive home care. Brandon Scott-Omenka said that this was an indicator that in some ways punished them for doing well; as prevention meant less people were going into residential/nursing care the ones that were, were those with the most critical needs so the unit cost for these is higher.

Steph Simcox commented that they were doing what they could to drive down unit costs, including working with procurement to try to lower the cost of private sector placements.

Councillor Bird commented that they would find this very difficult due to pressures on this sector as well, he asked whether the unit cost applied to just private sector or the council owned homes as well. Steph Simcox confirmed it was both and Councillor Bird commented that it could therefore be the council owned homes driving up the costs.

(SAS 8.3GN250) Staff turnover- percentage of SSD directly employed staff that left during the year to 30 September. Brandon Scott-Omenka said that this target was distorted by the transfer of staff to Housing 21 as they were still on the council books at this point. If take these out the figure drops to 9% which would put the target back in the green.

(SAS 8.3GN251) Staff vacancies- percentage of SSD directly employed posts vacant on 30 September. Brandon Scott-Omenka said this appeared to be linked to transformation and modernisation, but they did not have any further diagnostics on what it meant at this time.

(LPI7) Average waiting time for major adaptations form OT referral work. Councillor Pitt said the definition of the indicators stated it was over a value of £500 which was at odds to what they were told previously.

Sue Byard confirmed that this was a printing error and the figure should read £5000

(LPI25) % change in families accommodated in temporary accommodation. Councillor Robertson expressed concern that this indicator was red and declining. Sue Byard confirmed an action plan had been put in place to address this.

Councillor Robertson asked if total numbers rather than a percentage would be more meaningful and if officers new this figure?

Sue Byard said she did not have the figure but she could bring it back, the indicator was dictated to them so they would still have to report it as a percentage.

Resolved

That the Health, Social Care and Inclusion scrutiny and performance panel note the report.

The meeting terminated at 7.40pm.

Chair:

Date: