

SOCIAL CARE & INCLUSION SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL

THURSDAY 25 March 2010 AT 6.00 P.M.

Panel Members Present

Councillor T Oliver (Chair)
Councillor C Ault (Vice-Chair)
Councillor I Robertson
Councillor J Barton
Councillor G Clarke
Councillor B Douglas-Maul
Councillor A Paul

Officers Present

Margaret Willcox – Assistant Director – Adult Services
Clive Wright – Director, Walsall Partnership
Elemay Parkes – Director of Community Regeneration
& Human Resources, Black Country Housing
Association (BCHA)
Lisa Smith – Research Officer - BCHA
Matthew Underhill – Scrutiny Officer

76/09 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received on behalf of Councillors J Barton & V Woodruff; also Brandon Scott-Omenka.

77/09 SUBSTITUTIONS

There were no substitutions for the duration of this meeting.

78/09 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP

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

79/09 MINUTES

In relation to item 71/09 Personalisation, Officers agreed to provide further information to Members regarding the potential role for third sector organisations to offer payroll services, as well as potentially support the management of payments for service users.

RESOLVED:

That

- 1. officers will provide further information to Members regarding financial services that might be offered by the third sector for service users;**
and
- 2. the minutes of the meeting held on 11 FEBRUARY 2010, copies having previously been circulated, be approved as a true and accurate record.**

80/09 LOCAL INVOLVEMENT NETWORK (LINK)

The Director of Walsall Partnership introduced the item (annexed). He explained that it provided an update in relation to recent activity at the LINK, including work undertaken by the host organisation, Black Country Housing Association (BCHA), following earlier updates to the Panel, which highlighted a number of concerns regarding the performance of the Board. The main points of the briefing and subsequent discussion were as follows:

- The Research Officer (BCHA) explained that all fifteen members of the LINK Board would be stepping down as part of an election process that was now underway. The election itself will take place within the next few weeks with results announced at the LINK Annual General Meeting (AGM) on 12 May 2010;
- A community engagement campaign, including a number of community roads show events, was being undertaken aimed at both raising membership of the LINK, particularly within the Black, Minority Ethnic (BME) community and youth groups, as well as seeking to encourage potential new Board members to nominate themselves for the upcoming election;
- As part of efforts to deliver a LINK Board which has a good range of skills and experience, the nomination pack sets out both the roles and responsibilities of a Board member, as well as inviting potential candidates to identify specific skills they possess. It is intended to use this information on ballot papers to give voters a more informed choice. Electors would have the option of voting for up to 7 members of the Board;
- The nomination packs had only recently been launched with two new nominations and two existing Board member nominations having been received thus far. Officers explained that the current activity was aimed at changing the dynamics of the Board, with the likely outcome of the election being the appointment of a mixture of new and previous Board members. Officers and the Panel agreed that it was important that a fair and transparent election process took place to avoid any challenge and ensure a robust LINK Board going forward;
- Officers from BCHA agreed to attend a future Panel meeting with the newly elected Chair of the LINK Board;
- The Research Officer also explained that membership of the LINK was now 134. However, this includes a large number of groups, therefore the number of people the LINK have access to is much higher;
- Other recent activity undertaken by the LINK included work in relation to the appointments and discharges system at Walsall Manor Hospital.

RESOLVED:

That officers from Black Country Housing Association (BCHA) will attend a future Panel meeting with the newly elected Chair of the LINK Board.

81/09 LINKS TO WORK

The Assistant Director, Adult Services introduced the report (annexed) explaining that it provided an update regarding restructuring activity currently underway at the Links to Work service. The main points of the report and subsequent discussion were as follows:

- The team at Links to Work had now been reduced by thirteen. At this point four members of staff remain “at risk”. One of those staff was currently undertaking a job trial which had now been extended from four to six weeks. As a consequence it had been necessary to extend the original twenty-nine week redeployment period by two weeks for all of those in “at risk” posts to ensure that the process remained equitable. However, the Union representative explained that it was his understanding that the extension had not been agreed by senior officers from the service. It was agreed that the Assistant Director would seek further clarification on this matter and provide guidance to Members;
- A reduction in the number of Links to Work sites from three to two is currently being considered. However, this will not impact on the 147 service users as the site reduction contemplated relates to unused space from activity that has now ceased. It is also hoped to be able to transfer revenue generated by the service to help maintain the remaining sites;
- In addition to further updates regarding “at risk” staff, officers also agreed to provide guidance to the Panel in the new municipal year relating to how restructured services were being delivered.

RESOLVED:

That

- 1. officers will provide clarification to Members regarding the extension of twenty-nine week redeployment period for “at risk” staff at Links to Work;**
- and**
- 2. officers will provide guidance to the Panel in the new municipal year relating to how restructured services are being delivered, together with updates regarding “at risk” staff.**

82/09 DOMICILIARY CARE WORKING GROUP

The Chair introduced the item (annexed) explaining that it was the final report of the Domiciliary Care working group, he also expressed his thanks for the officer and external expert support provided. The main points of the briefing and subsequent discussion were as follows:

- The initial meetings of the working had suggested that there were only limited areas of concern with the provision of domiciliary care in Walsall. However, discussions with a number of local care providers had highlighted a number of significant problems;
- As a consequence the report is very critical of current practices in a number of areas and these are reflected in the working group’s recommendations. For example, the existing approach to procurement, in particular e-auctions, where the lowest bid is successful, caused great concern. A price-target of £10.61 per hour for care provision was set by the Council, yet it was apparent that this was in fact over 20% lower than the average of other local authorities within the Black Country, where around £13 an hour was more typical. It was clear that the Council was out of sync with neighboring authorities, with the price-target set contributing to unsustainable care provision. It was also clear that while e-auctions

might be suitable for capital procurement, for example, computer equipment, it was not appropriate for the purchase of social care services;

- The working group also determined that the system of block contracts, where a provider commits to delivering a set number of hours of care, and spot contracts, where care is provided on a case-by-case basis were very inefficient. For example, situations had developed whereby a provider was receiving payment for 1,000 hours of care while only delivering 700 hours, and at the same time being asked to provide spot-contract care. This had meant that in effect the care provider was being paid twice. It would be important for the contract break, effective in October 2010, is used to renegotiate these arrangements with providers;
- Further issues highlighted by the working group were the limited monitoring of the provision of care that was currently in place, as well as a more proactive role for social workers in resolving concerns. While the clarity of information provided to the working group regarding concerns and complaints was also identified as a concern;
- The Assistant Director provided guidance in response to a number of the issues raised and the related recommendations. This included that it was now recognised that the existing procurement model, including the use of e-auctions and block contracts were not appropriate. However, to ensure the stability of providers it would be necessary to undertake a progressive contract break process, commencing in October 2010, but continued over a period of a number of months;
- While the introduction of Personalisation and personal budgets also demanded a change in the approach taken. In respect of call monitoring, the Council is developing electronic monitoring which will mean payment is only made for care that is actually delivered. This piece of work is currently being led by the Joint Commissioning Unit;
- Responding to the working group's recommendation relating to the retention of some in-house care provision, the Assistant Director explained that it had been determined that within the specialist areas of care, specifically end of life, dementia, and palliative, the Council could deliver better and more cost-effective services than would be available from the private sector. This was recognised, as part of extensive work currently being undertaken with the PCT, as an important aspect of the support required to ensure that care recipients are able to remain outside of hospital care and have the best chance of long-term recovery. This would potentially mean that the Council would fund care that would have previously been the responsibility of the PCT or NHS. However, a system was being devised which would enable the Council to recover costs from these partner organisations. Work was also underway to better understand the long term needs of specific communities and areas of the borough;
- In respect of the responsibility of social workers in managing concerns, this in fact forms part a significant piece of work which is currently underway seeking to increase the effectiveness of the role. This includes a consultation, to determine the type of support and training needed. While work is also underway to encourage social workers to consider agreeing broader call time windows, the time at which a carer will visit, with this improved flexibility likely to reduce pressure on providers services.

The Panel welcomed the working group's proposals and recommended that they be reported to Cabinet.

RESOLVED:

That:

1. an urgent review of the current procurement system, including block contracts, is undertaken;
2. assurance is provided for the future as to actual service delivery of contracts. This should include an action plan against potential fraud to be reported to the Social Care and Inclusion Scrutiny and Performance Panel;
3. an effective element of domiciliary care in-house services is retained in order to react to emergency situations and/or withdrawals from existing contracts by private sector providers. Services should be delivered based on comparative costs assessed on a like-for-like basis;
4. further work be undertaken to develop the role of social workers in managing referrals, including concerns, to avoid delay in resolving issues;
5. further work to be undertaken, working closely with delivery partners, to improve capacity in service delivery by increasing care visit call time windows;
6. further work be undertaken on a joint commissioning approach between the Council and tPCT, including in relation to the role of community and health visitors and the community nursing service;
7. that detailed work is undertaken in relation to understanding types of need, the geographic location of need and likely demographic changes over the next decade;
8. e-auctions are no longer used for the commissioning of care services.

83/09 SOCIAL CARE AND INCLUSION PERFORMANCE SCORECARD, 2009-10, QUARTER 3

The Assistant Director introduced the report (annexed) explaining that under the Green Amber Red (GAR) traffic light system, it highlighted six green, four amber and eleven red. The main points of the briefing and subsequent discussion were as follows:

- In respect of **C72, Admissions to residential/ nursing care per 10,000 population aged 65+**, the scorecard indicates that the target of less than 85 had been narrowly missed by 1.57. However, this still indicated strong positive performance, as well as improvement on previous outturn;
- In relation to **142 LAA, Percentage of service users who have been supported to maintain independent living**, the performance for the quarter of 97.9% just missed the end of year target of 98%. This was in part a consequence of the decision to end a number of short life contracts;
- The **Intermediate care targets** are delivered in partnership with the PCT, which may have the impact of pushing Council performance down. In addition, it is possible that further activity will be recorded at a later point which will significantly increase performance;
- **130 Social care clients receiving Self Directed Support (direct payments and individual budgets)** indicated a significant upturn in the number of local residents who now received self directed support. While the score of 8.1% is below the Council's target of 15%, as well as being significantly lower than the national target for 2010/11 of 30%, a corrective

- action plan is being developed;
- Third quarter performance of 5.85% for **HR3 Percentage of working days/ shifts lost due to sickness absence during the financial year** will result in sickness levels at year end exceeding the 7% target. It is likely that this is in part a consequence of recent adverse weather and swine flu. A range of activity has been undertaken in response, this includes corrective action in relation to cases of long term sickness and regular review of the top 100 cases of long term sickness absence, additional training of managers in those areas with higher incidences of absence, as well as further efforts to tackle short term sickness. Officers agreed to provide further information to Members regarding the provision of sickness absence training for managers;
 - At a previous meeting the Panel had requested further details regarding the targets **D54 Equipment/ adaptations delivered within 7 days, and NI133 Timelines of social care package**. A combination of factors had impacted performance for the quarter. This included incidences of providers failing to deliver equipment within 28 days from assessment and 7 days from receipt of a referral. The total number of deliveries made between April and December 2009 was 912, of which 184 (20%) took in excess of the 28 days time limit. Work has been undertaken in conjunction with the Integrated Community Equipment Store (ICES) managers to address the delays in deliveries. Officers are also hopeful that the introduction of a retail-model in 2010-11 will enable individuals to make personalised and flexible arrangements which will tackle some of the existing challenges, including in relation to delivery, by encouraging a greater sense of ownership in the process, as well as remove a significant part of the provision burden from the Council. For example, if a relationship was established by the Council with a high street retailer for the provision of equipment, the Council would not then be responsible for warehousing stock, and an individual would simply present the retailer with a voucher and organise delivery directly. Officers agreed to provide details of proposals for a retail model at the earliest opportunity.

RESOLVED:

That

- 1. officers will provide guidance to Members regarding the provision of sickness absence training to managers;**
- and**
- 2. officers will provide guidance to the Panel regarding proposals for a retail model for the provision of equipment and adaptations at the earliest opportunity.**

84/09 WORK PROGRAMME 2009/10

The Panel noted the work programme and forward plan.

85/09 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Chair informed Members that the next Panel meeting would be confirmed at Annual Council on May 24 2010.

The meeting terminated at 7:10 pm

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