

Council – 8th November 2010

Portfolio holder brief – Social care and health - Councillor McCracken

The Social Care and Inclusion Directorate has seen significant change in the last year with services redesigned to meet the changing demands of our community needs and government legislation. Changes to staffing structures and working models have resulted in more efficient quality services and better value for money: an essential in today's difficult economic climate.

Social care presents ever increasing demands on the council's budget, but we have to make judgements which balance the social needs of social provision against finite resources available to us.

The directorate has developed strong working partnerships with key stakeholders in the best interests of Walsall people, delivering initiatives such as the Joint Commissioning Unit, work undertaken on hospital discharge to appropriate services, in a timely manner. Admissions to hospital are reduced through the Frail Elderly Pathway, implemented on the 1 April 2010. This has seen an increase in joint working and changes in partner systems show evidence of positive outcomes for the people of Walsall. A joint team is planned which will enable one person to review all aspects of care and to design an appropriate care package on discharge. The Joint Commissioning Unit, safeguarding teams and our health enforcement partners work successfully together to ensure that safeguarding procedures and adult protections issues protect people from harm. The directorate has increased awareness of the need to safeguard vulnerable people through training, meetings with stakeholders and the public.

The Director actively engages members of the public, service users and carers in plans for change and delivery of services. The new Director of Social Care, who has responsibility for all adult social care functions, engages personally with different groups in order to gain feedback on the services provided. The directorate adopts a "people first" approach and has a number of ongoing projects that involve service users at the planning stage and staff have consulted a range of stakeholders in the development of self-directed support and the review of fairer charging.

Social care officers work particularly well with our partners in health, emergency services and social housing groups, where strong positive relations have been developed in the interests of all concerned. The Joint Commissioning Unit has been developed over 2009/10 enabling a more strategic and integrated approach to service provision, ensuring savings and greater efficiency whilst improving outcomes for the people who use our services.

The new needs analysis assessment plans have been developed across a range of sectors such as home care and health inequalities. The Director has reviewed tenders across a range of services, including learning disabilities, older people's services, mental health and supported people, to deliver cost effective provision which continues to meet the needs of service users.

The directorate has exceeded its target for the provision of independent living by people with complex needs and the Learning Disabilities Steering Group will develop an improved care pathway and referral process system. The Goscote Day Centre has been completed and reprovision of NHS accommodation is on target for October 2010.

The directorate is reviewing the workforce and facilities provided in Walsall to ensure that young adults are offered services, wherever possible, to support them living within Walsall and is working closely with education to access courses from the local college.

During 2010 the directorate produced a new carers strategy, which will address the issue of "hidden" carers and facilitate involvement in decision making and planning processes. Specialist posts now come under one management structure to enable a more co-ordinated approach and we are confident that carers now feel more engaged and better supported. The role of young carers in Walsall is significant and they are supported through a variety of projects such as after school clubs and holiday activities. Links between adult and children's social service teams offers the opportunity to share views and experiences across the age range.

The Access and Response Centre was launched in November 2009, providing a first contact for service users. Early problems with process and procedures are being continually improved and the centre ensures that people receive 24 hour social care contact, including emergency assessment and response.

In response to the Government's policy on personal budgets, the directorate has designed a self-assessment questionnaire to inform allocation of resources and we are committed to delivering an increasingly personalised service which meets the people's needs. We have seen a steady rise in the number of people holding personal budgets, albeit below that of similar directorates in England.

The directorate continues to use assistive technology to support people in their own home and the use of Telecare has increased year on year. The Sensory Support Team has supplied a range of equipment and collaborative arrangements with emergency services help to support people living in their own home.

The social care directorate is committed to working more closely with the third sector, who can make a huge contribution to service provision through their specialist areas of knowledge and expertise across the sector. Since coming into post the Director has actively engaged with a range of groups and organisations, such as the Disability Forum, Age Concern, Deaf People's Centre, Carers Forum and many others. Regular meetings with the voluntary sector are now being held with the aim of streamlining and improving services and full inclusion of voluntary third sector organisations, which now have a direct line of contact with the department and feel more valued and involved in the social care service.

IN CONCLUSION

The Adult Social Care & Inclusion Directorate is making good progress on its journey of improvement and is making a real difference to the lives of vulnerable people in Walsall through the delivery and development of a range of high quality and cost effective services.

29th October 2010