

SOCIAL CARE AND INCLUSION SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL

TUESDAY 4 SEPTEMBER 2012 AT 6.00 P.M.

Panel Members Present: Councillor B. Douglas-Maul (Chair)
Councillor D. Barker
Councillor K. Chambers
Councillor L. Rattigan
Councillor J. Rochelle
Councillor A. Underhill

Officers Present: Paul Davies, Executive Director (Social Care and Inclusion)
Andy Rust, Head of Joint Commissioning
Suzanne Joyner, Head of Community Care (Partnerships)
Sean Cook, Head of Access, Assessment and Care Management
John Batchelor, Healthwatch Transition Co-ordinator
Lloyd Haynes, Finance Manager
Craig Goodall, Scrutiny Officer

194/12 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received for the duration of the meeting from Councillors R. Burley and T. Oliver.

195/12 SUBSTITUTIONS

Councillor A. Underhill substituted for Councillor R. Burley and Councillor K. Chambers substituted for Councillor T. Oliver.

196/12 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP

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

197/12 MINUTES

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 12 July 2012, copies having previously been circulated be approved as a true and accurate record.

198/12 BENEFITS BASED CHARGING

The Panel discussed benefits based charging (BBC) with two service users.

The Chair recapped that at the last meeting of the Panel Members had noted a number of complaints about BBC during consideration of a report on statutory complaints. Therefore Members had requested the opportunity to discuss the issues with service

users. To this end Mrs Christine Stringer and Mrs Nancy Hassell had been invited to address the meeting.

Mrs Stringer suggested to Members that BBC was unjust, immoral and flawed. This was because disability based benefits were awarded to cover the extra costs that the recipient needed to cover due to their disabilities. It was not fair that this money was now required to pay for services provided by the local authority. This meant that disabled people were disadvantaged by the new system. She noted that pensioners were still taxpayers and deserved to be treated fairly. A briefing note reflecting the Mrs Stringers views was circulated at the meeting (annexed).

Mrs Hassell explained that due to her disabilities it was not possible for her to travel around. Therefore she used her benefits to pay for travel costs. However, under the BBC charging scheme she would be unable to do this as her benefits would have to be used to pay for other services.

The Executive Director (Social Care and Inclusion) reported that he had worked closely with Mrs Stringer and Mrs Hassell recently to try and address their issues. He reported that it was impossible to fund existing social care requirements from the Councils budget. Therefore the only choice to maintain current service levels was to make charges to service users. He noted that this was not a desirable course of action to take, however, it was the only way to maintain service levels. He stated that over £3m of staff savings had been made before charges were made to service users. He added the current system of funding social care was not working and a long term solution was required. It was likely that a proposal would be developed as part of the comprehensive spending review taking place over the autumn. Although there were still problems to address from reducing local authority spending and an increasing elderly population; many of whom were in poor health.

The following are the principle points from the ensuing discussion:

- It was noted that retired service users in their own homes were often more vulnerable than those who lived in registered social landlord properties;
- A Member felt that the current situation was caused by historically high benefits payments;
- It was important to understand if service users were coping with the changes introduced by BBC.
- No charges were made for health related services.
- The complexity of the benefits system was a barrier.
- 298 service users stopped using council services following the introduction of BBC. Each one was referred to other potential sources of care.

The Chairman thanked Mrs Stringer and Mrs Hassell for attending the meeting and sharing their views.

Resolved:

That a report on fairer charging be considered at the 20 November 2012 meeting of the Panel.

199/12 **COMMUNITY SOCIAL WORK MODEL**

The Panel considered a presentation on the community social work model (CSWM). The Head of Access, Assessment and Care Management gave a presentation to the Panel on the CSWM (annexed).

Members were pleased with the model and the principle of social workers being based in the community meeting people. It was reported that lots of joint working was taking place which was resulting in good outcomes for service users.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

200/12 **SUPPORT FOR LIVING AT HOME SERVICES**

The Panel considered a statement from United Kingdom Home Care Association that raised concerns about the quality of homecare services declining along with its funding.

The Head of Joint Commissioning reported Walsall worked with a contractual framework known as 'Support for Living at Home Services' (SHLHS). This allowed service users to choose their own care provider. Fee levels were set by the provider. This flexibility with providers was designed to prevent poor care being delivered as service users could simply choose to receive their care from another provider should they be unsatisfied.

The following are the principal points from the ensuing discussion:

- Fees ranged from £10.50 - £15.50 (with some exceptions).
- Service users paid for the services directly. Many service users bought help in voluntarily and self funded.
- Brokers were available to help service users choose a provider based on their needs and priorities.
- Over 100 companies had applied to be providers. The majority of these were declined for failing to meet the criteria.
- It was important that the quality of care being delivered was monitored.
- Service user's needs were assessed and a point's score was awarded which tallied into a financial award to be used as the service user saw fit to support their needs.

Resolved

That:

- 1. the quality and effectiveness of Support for Living at Home service providers should be closely monitored;**

and;
- 2. Councillor D. Coughlan go through the Support for Living at Home Service assessment process as a case study exercise.**

201/12 QUARTER 1 FINANCIAL MONITORING POSITION FOR 2012/13

The Panel considered the predicted revenue and capital outturn position for 2012/13, based on the financial performance for quarter 1 (April 2012 to June 2012) for services within the remit of the Panel.

The Finance Manager reported that the current forecast was for a net revenue overspend of £49,000 and a breakeven position for capital spending. He highlighted the revenue position across each service area in the directorate and that the Social Care and Inclusion Directorate was currently funding a post in the Welfare Rights Service.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

202/12 LOCAL HEALTHWATCH

The Panel considered the latest situation with regard to the development of a local Healthwatch organisation.

The Local Healthwatch Transition Co-ordinator reported that the process to commission an organisation to operate 'Healthwatch Walsall' had been started. A draft tender document to issue for procurement purposes was being developed and a large consultation with the public and stakeholder organisations was also taking place. He also highlighted that the annual funding for 'Healthwatch Walsall' had been reduced from £133,000 to £67,799 per year.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

203/12 HOUSING 21 SERVICES – FUTURE OF RUSHALL MEWS

The Panel were informed of the rationale for the development of the Frail Elderly Pathway and Hollybank House as a more effective way of enabling older people to regain their independence after a stay in hospital, leading to the closure of Rushell Mews Intermediate Care Centre.

The Head of Joint Commissioning explained that Housing 21, Walsall Council and Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust were seeking to improve the way that older people were enabled to become independent after a stay in hospital. He explained that Rushell Mews required a lot of work to bring up to modern care standards as it was not purpose built for its current use. The new proposals would see more older people supported to live independently and improved facilities at Hollybank House for those who needed further care before returning home.

In response to questions Members were informed that Hollybank House would provide better quality bed space for patients. The reduction in the number of available beds would be manageable as more patients would be supported to return home.

Members requested to the opportunity to review the winter service plan.

Resolved:

That:

- 1. the closure of Rushell Mews Intermediate Care Centre be noted;
and;**
- 2. the winter service plan be considered at the next meeting of the Panel.**

192/12 WORK PROGRAMME 2012/13 AND FORWARD PLAN

Resolved:

That the work programme and Forward Plan be noted.

193/12 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Chair informed Members that the date of the next meeting would be 15 October, 2012 at 6.00pm.

The meeting terminated at 8.33 p.m.

Chair:

Date: