

BRIEFING NOTE

Agenda item no. 9

TO: Social Care and Inclusion Scrutiny and Performance Panel
DATE: 7 November 2013

Social Care Residential Accommodation – Framework Contract Update

Purpose

To provide an update on progress with the procurement of accommodation-based services comprising residential and nursing care home placements and housing related support services funded by Walsall Council and Walsall Clinical Commissioning Group (WCCG).

Progress to Date

An earlier report to Scrutiny Committee in June 2103 outlined the need to specify three different lots:

- Lot 1 - Residential and Nursing Care Home Placements
- Lot 2 - Accommodation for young people at risk of homelessness, and
- Lot 3 - People at risk and/or suffering from domestic abuse

Work on each of these has progressed as follows:

Residential and Nursing Care Home Placements

The service specification is nearing completion with a final round of consultation currently underway. The specification forms a major part of the procurement exercise and is the basis upon which the quality of care will be monitored. The framework contract will be joint between Walsall Council and Walsall Clinical Commissioning Group and so has been developed in partnership with health colleagues from Clinical Governance, Medicines Management, Infection Control and others, as well as all those involved from across the Council. The specification can be made available to Scrutiny Panel members for comment.

The first of two workshops with care home providers was held on 15 October 2013. The key issues were that given the resources required to make a submission providers could see little advantage in applying to join the framework, and no guarantee of future placements from the Council or any improvement in fees. This raises the question of whether an alternative approach should be adopted of utilising individual contracts for each placement instead of renewing the framework contract. This issue will be examined in more detail following the second workshop, which will take place on 1 November 2013 and will include a presentation of commissioning intentions based upon the Market Position Statements.

The risk register includes the possibility that the exercise may not be completed in time for the new contract to take effect from the end of March 2014 at which point the current contract finishes. If this were to be the case, then the current contract arrangements would have to be extended as an urgent action by the Council.

Accommodation for young people at risk of homelessness

Walsall Council currently spends circa £540k on supported accommodation provision for young homeless people aged 16 or 17. Savings were identified for this budget which prompted a review of the experience of the young people in the service. The findings were that most of the young people had become homeless as a result of family breakdown and that some young people were in a cycle of readmissions. There is therefore a need to invest a greater effort in preventing family breakdown, supporting the young people in the accommodation to prevent readmission more effectively and to develop community based shared accommodation for the young people to move on to.

Further work is continuing jointly between Children's Services, Social Care and Inclusion, and Housing Services to redesign the service pathway so that there is a greater effort in prevention of family breakdown leading to a reduction in the number of young people becoming homeless.

People at risk and/or suffering from domestic abuse

The Walsall Domestic Abuse Strategy 2011-14 'A Time for Change' produced by the Safer Walsall Partnership and key stakeholders from the Walsall Domestic Abuse Strategic Group recommends a strategic move to an integrated service pathway for domestic abuse prevention, intervention, victims support, and offender management. The strategy proposes multi-agency working between statutory agencies and the voluntary/community sectors in delivering this pathway model. The 2011-14 Strategy will be reviewed early in 2014 setting out the next 3 year's priority areas for development of domestic abuse services and partner agency collaboration.

The redesign will replace existing services that are currently funded and commissioned separately by Social Care and Inclusion (SC&I); Children's Services; Public Health; and Community Safety with an integrated pathway of services commissioned jointly, and which focuses greater attention upon the need for prevention.

The full range of domestic abuse services will be commissioned into one integrated service pathway by April 2016 via a single tender exercise. In the meantime SC&I and Children's services will re-commission domestic abuse services by April 2014 through undertaking two separate parallel tender exercises. The duration of these contracts will be up to a maximum 3 years, with the option to expire after 2 years to allow a corporate tender to be conducted.

This work is being conducted by a Project Board comprising membership across Public Health, Community Safety, Housing, Children's Services, Probation, Police, Finance, Legal and Procurement Team and will be led by the Joint Commissioning Unit.

Recommendation

That Scrutiny Panel notes the progress to date with the procurement of accommodation-based services.

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