

**Social Care Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee
(Via Teams)**

Members Present:

3 March 2022

Chairperson: Councillor L.M.Purcell

Vice Chairperson: Councillor C.Galsworthy

Councillors: A.P.H.Davies, J.Miller, D.Whitelock,
A.N.Woolcock, C.Edwards, W.F.Griffiths,
H.C.Clarke and N.J.E.Davies

Officers In Attendance: A.Jarrett, A.Thomas, K.Warren, J.Hodges,
R Davies, Chele.Howard, C.Frey-Davies,
D.Harding, Potts, S.Waite, T.Davies and
C.Plowman

Cabinet Invitees: Councillors A.R.Lockyer and P.D.Richards

1. **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meetings held on the 13 September 2021 and 20 January 2022 were approved as a true and accurate record.

2. **Impact of Covid-19 on The Sustainability of Older People Care Homes In Neath Port Talbot (Verbal Update)**

The Head of Adult Services provided Members with a verbal update relating to the impact of Covid-19 on the sustainability of older people care homes in Neath Port Talbot.

It was explained that at this point in time care homes were still functioning between recovery and response mode, and situations in individual care homes changed very regularly; due to this current position, it was difficult for Officers to provide a full, detailed update on the adult care home sector.

Officers confirmed that they would be able to provide a better insight into how this sector could look in the future, including the sustainability of the marketplace, in around 3 months' time. It was

noted that care homes were managing, despite the fact that the Council has had to step in to help with the issue of staff shortages.

Members asked if there were still issues with recruiting staff for care homes. Officers stated that there were still issues, with some homes relying very heavily on agency staff. However, it was explained that the Council was undertaking a piece of work to look at the whole of the care sector workforce in order to try and resolve the current issues at hand. In regards to the domiciliary care market, it was noted that this was in a similar position, and Officers were doing what they could in order to provide support.

The Committee asked for an update in regards to the position of respite care. It was explained that since the start of the pandemic, there had been struggles with providing significant respite care; however, due to the importance of providing carers with a break from caring, the Council had come up with some alternative forms of respite, and now had a number of schemes which could be utilised going forward. It was added that these schemes would be progressed over the next year, as Officers were taking a whole new look at respite and what could be done differently the other side of the pandemic. An example that was provided was that some carers were asking for only a few hours out of their day in order to take some time for themselves; rather than a full day or week. In the cases where families were really struggling, it was noted that individuals were placed into a residential care home as part of extended care; this wasn't a form of respite, however it provided the family with a break from caring for a few days. In conclusion, it was stated that respite wasn't entirely back to how Officers would like; however, it was in a position in which it could be approved, which was something Officers had not been able to do for the past two years.

A discussion took place relating to the assessments of individuals. Members were informed that there should not be a significant hold up with assessments, despite the pressures from the community demand and the hospital demand. Members were encouraged to liaise with Officers if they were aware of issues with individual cases; Officers would then be able to progress the case forward.

Following on from the discussion relating to respite care, it was queried if Officers were looking into the resurrection of the day centres which provided a full day respite. It was confirmed that Officers were looking at all forms of alternative provisions, which were

different to what was currently in place for respite; for example the development of independent living hub at B'spoked.

3. Pre-Decision Scrutiny

The Committee chose to scrutinise the following Cabinet Board items:

Quarter 3 Performance Report 2021-22

Members were presented with the Children and Young People, and Adult Services Performance Report for the 3rd Quarter Period (April 2021 – December 2021).

The circulated report detailed an increase in pressure in the single point of contact care centre; the report noted that there was an increase in the number of cases in which risk was being identified as a result of the section 47 enquires. It was asked if Officers could confirm if the increase in pressure was related to the pandemic. The Head of Children and Young People Services confirmed that the single point of contact care centre had been under significant pressure throughout the pandemic. It was explained that Officers were prepared and responsive to the rise in demand, as prior to the pandemic a substantial amount of resource, including additional staff, had been allocated to the service. It was added that demand currently remained high in Neath Port Talbot, however Officers were able to continue to meet this. Members were reassured that children services had maintained safeguarding responsibility throughout the whole pandemic; Officers continued to visit families and children who were vulnerable in the community.

Reference was made to the percentage of re-registrations of children on the local authority child protection register; it was queried why this performance indicator was listed as red. Officers explained that the Council had created an arrangement with its partners, local schools, health visitors and families, in which they were all encouraged to re refer should a situation change in the future; this must be kept in mind when looking at the re referral rate. It was highlighted that the referral rate was regularly monitored, and Officers audit all of the cases in order to determine if there were any lessons learned or themes; this type of information will then be fed back into the service. Officers mentioned that they were not concerned with the figure that was listed in the performance indicators due to these reasons.

Members asked Officers to elaborate on the performance indicator relating to delayed transfers of care; the report detailed that Officers were unable to calculate this performance indicator as no data had

been provided by Welsh Government since March 2020 due to Covid-19. Officers explained that this indicator had been stopped at the start of the pandemic. Members were reassured that the Head of Adult Services was aware of the figures relating to those in hospital beds, those waiting for a package of care or those waiting a residential care placement; this breakdown of information was provided to Officers on a weekly basis. It was noted that there were delays, however the Team were aware of the position of each of these delays and the reasons why.

A discussion took place in relation to the number of cases of adults at risk being reported. The circulated report highlighted that it was unsurprising that reports had increased, as professionals were more cautious in their reporting; however, the number of reports that led to enquiries needed was 20%. Officers explained that there were a combination of reasons as to why this was the case:

- The Team does encourage reports to be made, even in circumstances where partners only have a slight inkling;
- In the case where an adult at risk doesn't automatically trigger a safeguard in response, the Team had really experienced 'front doors' across Children and Adult Services which slowed the process down; they gather information and undertake lateral checks, which then might result in someone receiving advice, support or caring support as a result of that report. It was mentioned that this wasn't necessarily safeguarding, however had an impact on the figures report to the Committee;
- The Team had also changed how they approached adult safeguarding; before safeguarding was moved into 'front door', a lot of safeguarding cases went straight into adult safeguarding. However, it was noted that the Team had started to allocate reports into various sub sections, such as those relating to professional concerns and those relating to adult at risk; this in itself had seen a significant reduction in the section 126 enquiries.

It was stated that the points raised above were factors as to why there was a lower percentage of reports which led to enquiries needed; Officers carefully monitor and check these figures, as well as check in on a monthly as a Safeguarding Team to look further into some of the cases.

Concerns were raised in regards to the high number of caseloads per worker for the Disability Team. Members asked if there was any particular reason why the Team had the highest number of cases, and if Officers were satisfied that this was safe. It was stated that the caseloads across the whole service were closely monitored; there wasn't any unallocated cases within the Team, and all cases were appropriate and managed safely within the service. The Committee was informed that additional staff had been brought into the service to make the caseloads manageable, and the Team were fortunate to have a number of specialist workers. It was noted that there wasn't a great deal of scope to move cases once they had met their criteria for children with disability, given the nature of the reasons why those children were being supported by Team; this meant that a high level of experience and expertise had been built up within the service. Officers added that the Team was busy, and had a lot of work to be carried out; however, there were no concerns with regards to the volume of work.

Members asked what provisions and support was in place in the County Borough for young people with profound multiple learning difficulties, after they left school. In order to provide sufficient information to Members, Officers asked if they could prepare a briefing paper to circulate to the Committee outside of the meeting; as this meeting was the last in the administration for the Social Care, Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee.

Reference was made to the Learning Review detailed in Appendix 6 of the circulated report. The report highlighted that the aim of the review was to try to understand the practice on the case against the background of their physical and psychological work environment; and that the point of the review was to not assign blame or responsibility, but to learn to improve. The Committee asked for information on how the case was chosen, and for assurances that the review was carried out as stated in the report; to not assign blame or responsibility. Officers explained that it had been acknowledged in the recent multi agency inspection, that the Learning Review was in place to establish a learning culture within Neath Port Talbot; a genuine attempt to get individuals together, and take the opportunities for lessons learned. It was stated that exercise was completed with Council Officers and partners; the feedback received from the reviews were humbling, as staff appreciated the time spent with them, and the approach taken. The Head of Children and Young People Services assured Members that the Learning Reviews had

been a very positive experience, and couldn't be further away from a blame culture.

Following on from the above, Officers expressed that it was a reflective space for practitioners, which was very well received and very well established. It was noted that a number of learning reviews had been undertaken, and Officers were happy to share the criteria used to select the cases; the criteria was always under review, as Officers recognised the importance of feedback into the system. In regards to the specific case, the results were highlighted to be those of any case that progresses to a child or adult practice review. It was mentioned that internal learning was held immediately in a bid to identify early learning; this prevents waiting for a child practice review, and helps to inform practice immediately, without any delays.

Following scrutiny, the report was noted.

Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards to Liberty Protection Safeguards - An Overview

The Committee received a report detailing an overview of the Liberty Protection Safeguards (LPS) and the work currently underway to prepare for its implementation, and the anticipated implications for the Local Authority.

Members suggested holding an All Member Seminar for the new administration on the topic of LPS, to inform all Members of the new set up.

The circulated report stated that the Local Authority was currently in the process of reviewing the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) team structure, in-house versus agency. It was expressed that in-house would be most preferred, as it would be the only way the Council could have full control over the issues. Officers confirmed that the preference would be in-house; the reference to agency was included in the report to reflect the current response. It was noted that agency was only used in cases which needed to be responded to in a timely manner, to those urgent requests for DoLS. Officers added that the Team had always worked to a backlog in cases, it wasn't unusual, as it was through the sheer demand that DoLS had brought.

It was acknowledged that a start date for the new set up hadn't been confirmed due to the implications of the pandemic. Members asked how Officers were managing with budget planning with no apparent start date. Additionally, the report referenced that the existing team may need to be expanded; it was asked if Officers were confident that

they'll be able to recruit the necessary new staff. The Principle Officer for Safeguarding explained that throughout the report Officers had used the word 'may'; this was due to Officers waiting for codes of practice, and for the other Welsh Government Working Groups to feed into the Regional Working Group. It was highlighted that at the moment, there was a lot of guesswork; some of the figures in the report were conservative, however this was the best that could be predicated across the Region. Officers suspected that the implementation of LPS will be set back for another year; however, this will provide the Council and the Region with more time to plan.

In regards to the Information Technology element of the report, Members hoped that a stand-alone system for Neath Port Talbot would not be adopted, as the need for a flow of communication and information across the Region was very important.

Following scrutiny, the report was noted.

Procurement of Falls Mobile Response Service - 6 Month Pilot

A report was provided to the Committee regarding the proposed six month pilot of a falls mobile response service for users of NPT lifeline/telecare services.

Concerns were raised in relation to the fact that the pilot was only aimed at those who were users of NPT lifeline; it would be beneficial to include others who could potentially have a fall. Officers highlighted that this was a small pilot, with a small amount of money to trial this service in one specific area; the Afan Cluster had been chosen to trial this as there was currently a set up with Health in the Swansea Valley and Neath areas. Members were informed that the Council were exploring a number of avenues in relation to this matter; this trial was on aspect in order to identify if the concept could work. It was added that Officers were also exploring whether this was something the Council's in-house home care service could utilise; in the past, the Council used to run a 24/7 service, however at the time it was analysed that the need wasn't there throughout the night. Officers stated that times had changed since then, as the statistics showed; therefore, the need for a 24/7 service could be re-analysed. It was explained that if the pilot was successful, the plan would eventually be to spread this out to enable anyone to access the relevant care. Officers will be presenting the evaluation of the pilot to the Committee.

Members asked if it would be possible to work with the welfare benefits section, and the third sector to increase the number of people using a lifeline service through the access of grants. Officers confirmed that this was possible; there was opportunity at this stage with the partnership work being undertaken with welfare, and the preventative agenda itself, to be able to identify opportunities and how they can be maximised. It was mentioned that a smaller project called ARMED was running alongside this pilot; this project did not require lifeline, and was based on preventative work and monitoring, to enable support to be provided before a fall takes place.

The Committee asked what ARMED stood for. The Director of Social Services, Health and Housing explained that Advanced Risk Modelling for Early Detection (ARMED) was an innovative prevention and self-management certified medical device; it combined pioneering predictive analytics modelling with wearable technology, and health and social care data. It was added that Officers had been working on this initiative with partners in Cardiff, who ran it at the beginning of the pandemic and saw a significant decrease in the number of people who were falling due to the prevention element. Members were informed that ARMED was a wearable device which monitors activity level and blood pressure; this information would then be reported back to base to highlight any change or fluctuation in mobility. If the data highlighted any changes, it was explained that Delta Wellbeing would complete a welfare check, and link in with the Council's in-house physio who could recommend various exercises.

It was queried when the pilot was going to take place, and if Officers were going to encompass the winter months, as this could possibly highlight more falls. Officers hoped to start the project as soon as possible; if approved at Cabinet Board, it was aimed that the end of March / beginning of May would be the start of the six month pilot. It was noted that a lot of pre-work had been completed beforehand in order to progress on this. The Committee was informed that this pilot won't quite encompass the winter months, however, it will provide opportunity to evaluate the pilot; if successful, Officers could progress a case ready for coming winters.

Following scrutiny, the Committee was supportive of the proposals to be considered by the Cabinet Board.

Neath Port Talbot Housing Support Programme Strategy

Members were informed of the draft Neath Port Talbot Housing Support Programme Strategy and the proposal to seek approval to undertake a 90 days public consultation.

A discussion took place in regards to 'plan on a page'. Officers explained that it was used for most of the strategic strategy work carried out; it highlights the key points on a page, to enable anyone to look at the information quickly and easily, in order to understand what it was that the Council was intending to do.

The Committee was reminded that, at the start of the pandemic, Welsh Government amended the legislation relating to Council duties for people applying for homelessness support, by removing the requirement that a household was in priority need. The circulated report stated that this had more than doubled the demand for emergency housing; Members asked if these regulations were likely to continue. It was confirmed that the regulations were likely to continue; Welsh Government were committed to having zero homelessness across Wales, and they had been trying to get Councils to address the huge rise in demand. Officers stated that the demand for interim accommodation had more than doubled; pre pandemic, the Council had approximately 35-40 people in interim accommodation, however this week have had 151. It was explained that the priority need which was removed, which was what had caused the rise in demand, was still being noted as suspended; however, it was Welsh Governments intention to keep it this way, as they were expecting Local Authorities to establish a rapid rehousing model to address the issue. Officers noted that this programme was medium term, and it would be 5+ years before it was implemented; there was a lot of work to do for it. However, it was confirmed that there were a number of short term solutions in place; there were a number of accommodations that were being built/converted, Officers were working very closely with the Registered Social Landlords (RSL's), and there was a prevention team in place to try and work with individuals e.g. handling their debts, before they declare being homeless.

Members expressed the need to identify the plans for the longer term. It was hoped that the new administration would look into bring empty homes in the County Borough, back into Council ownership; as this could go a long way in addressing this issue.

Following scrutiny, the Committee was supportive of the proposals to be considered by the Cabinet Board.

4. Forward Work Programme 2021/22

The Social Care, Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Forward Work Programme for 2021/22 was noted.

CHAIRPERSON